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THE ONE ARM PARD



OR, Red Retribution in Borderland.

By BUFFALO BILL, (HON. W. F. CODY,)
AUTHOR OF "THE WIZARD BROTHERS," "WHITE
BEAVER," "WILD BILL," "TEXAS
JACK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

STRANGELY MET ON THE PRAIRIE.

A HORSEMAN was riding at a rapid canter across the prairies of Nebraska.

Horse and man were both such as to attract attention, for, to describe the animal first, he was large, long-limbed, black as ink, and with a mane and tail that were luxuriant in the extreme, the former falling almost to his knees, and the latter sweeping the prairie grass.

The equipments of the horse were an elegant saddle and bridle, silver-mounted, and a pair of holsters, out of which peeped the pearl-handled butts of revolvers, ready to be drawn at an instant's notice.

The rider was a man of perfect proportions, and he sat his horse with the ease of one who had been reared in the saddle, and knew his skill and strength there.

SEEING HER COMING AS SHE DID, THE HORSEMAN WHEELED ABOUT AND SAT AWAITING HER, HIS HAND INSTINCTIVELY RESTING ON THE HILT OF HIS REVOLVER.

He was dressed in black, wore high-topped boots, gold spurs, gauntlet gloves, and a belt about his slender waist in which were a pair of richly manufactured revolvers and a bowie-knife with a gemmed handle.

Upon his head was a black sombrero, with great, broad brim, turned up in front, and encircled by a cord of gold.

What his face was no one could tell, for it was hidden beneath a mask of strange device, for it consisted of a pair of crimson wings fastened together, the points going above the flaps of the sombrero, and the lower end reaching to the mouth, and half-shielding a silken mustache, with long, curling ends.

The wings extended back over the face to the ears, hiding it securely, all except the handsome mouth, even white teeth and blonde mustache.

In the wings were holes, through which dark eyes gleamed, and altogether the man was a strange-looking being in a garb still stranger.

Suddenly his horse, as he went along at a pace swift and steady as machinery, gave a start and sprang forward more quickly.

Like a flash the man had wheeled in his saddle and was glancing behind him.

There, just over the rise of prairie, which was a few hundred pards behind him, came a horse, a rider upon his back.

The rider was a woman, and alone, a strange sight in that wild land, and the horse was coming along like the very wind, covered with foam and panting like a hard-run hound.

The woman's face was a strong one, handsome, and with a certain fearless flash in the eyes that showed that she was by no means alarmed at being alone on the prairie.

Her form was slender and graceful, the riding-habit she wore fitting her well, and beneath her slouch hat, almost a sombrero, was a mass of golden curls, some of which had been shaken loose by her rapid riding, and had fallen adown her back.

Upon her hands were buckskin gauntlet gloves, and about her waist was a belt containing a pair of revolvers and knife, while a lariat hung from one horn of her saddle.

Altogether she was a striking personage, and one who appeared as though she could take her own part under almost any circumstances.

Seeing her coming as she did, the horseman wheeled about and sat awaiting her, his hand instinctively resting on the hilt of his revolver, and his manner that of one who was ready to greet a foe even under a woman's garb.

But the woman made no hostile demonstration, and drew rein near, while she said, in a pleasant voice:

"You are Captain Kit, the chief of the Red Angels of the Overland, I believe?"

"I am, madam, and may I add, am intensely surprised at seeing a lady alone upon these plains."

"And especially one who seeks the famous outlaw leader; but I have a motive in doing so, and have ridden hard to overtake you, for I have followed your trail for the past four hours."

"Indeed! You certainly have not spared your horse, for I have ridden at a rapid pace; but may I ask why you seek me, for I must be rude enough to confess I do not recall you, although your face seems familiar."

"We have met before, Captain Kit, and it is my friendly interest in you that has caused me to seek you now, for you are in danger."

"Sleeping and waking, I am always in danger, madam."

"Well, the danger does not now threaten you, but one whom you hold most dear. But come, your duty calls you back on the trail which you have just pursued, so while we ride in that direction I will tell you why I have sought you."

"Duty also calls me yonder on the Platte, madam, and unless I know the nature of that which bids me return, I cannot do so," he said, firmly.

"Ah! like most men, you accuse women of a fault you possess yourself, distrust," she said, with a smile.

"One who leads the life I do can only wholly trust himself," was his answer.

"Yes; and even then you are doubtful of yourself; but I see that I must tell you enough to show that I know you, Captain Kit."

"I do not deny who I am."

"True; but let me tell you that the fair lady you kidnapped from her home is in danger."

"Ha! how know you this?" he asked, eagerly.

"I know that you stole from Surgeon Frank Powell, of the fort, his bride of an hour, and carried her to a retreat you have in the hills down toward Colorado."

"You know this?" he said, with surprise.

"I do; and more—that you have in that retreat about a dozen of your band, with your negro attendant acting as her guard, and you left her with them, believing her to be safe."

"What! are there traitors in my camp?" he demanded, in angry tones.

"No; but there are those on your trail whom you have cause to fear."

"I fear no man, madam, and foes are ever upon my trail," he haughtily responded.

"Not even the Surgeon Scout, Frank Powell, whose bride you kidnapped?"

"He is a dangerous man, I admit, and if I held fear of any one, it would be of Frank Powell."

"And his brother, George, known as Night Hawk, the chief of scouts at the fort?"

"He is another man to be feared, I frankly concede."

"And the ranchero, Broncho Bill, the other brother of Surgeon Powell?"

"Yes; another very dangerous man for a foe, there is no denying it."

"And together they form a trio whose deeds have gained for them the *sobriquet* of 'The Wizard Three.'"

"Yes, they are worth three to one any day in a battle."

"Well, these three men, The Wizard Trio, the Powell pards, as men call them, are now preparing to visit your retreat and recapture your captives."

"By Heaven! but this is news to me, and gladly will I go back on my trail, for Janette Joslyn shall never again fall into the hands of Frank Powell!"

"Her husband!"

"Call him what you please to her, but she shall never see him!" and the bandit chief spoke excitedly, while the woman coolly remarked:

"I thought that I could give you news that would arouse you, Captain Kit."

"Woman, who are you?"

"Quick! tell me! and more—tell me how you gained this news, or I will—"

"What?"

At the utterance of the one word her revolver was leveled full in the face of the bandit leader.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

THE outlaw saw that the muzzle of the woman's revolver looked squarely in his face.

It was, too, not three feet distant, and held with a hand that had not the slightest tremor to it.

As quick as a flash of lightning she had drawn, cocked and leveled the weapon, even before he had an idea of her doing so.

He knew that he was wholly at her mercy, for a motion toward his own weapon would be the signal for her slender finger to draw on the trigger; but he did not move, and his voice was firm as he said:

"You are quick with a weapon, madam."

"Yes, and a dead shot, too. What is it that you expected to do with me?" and she smiled.

"You hold the power to make your own terms," he answered.

"Then I will be merciful and gratify your curiosity, for it seems you threatened me only to find out who I am."

"I confess to an honest desire to know."

"You will pardon me for any offense I may have committed, if I tell you?"

"Yes."

"Did you not send a man of your band to discover what was the sentiment at the fort about your running off with Frank Powell's bride?"

"Yes."

"Whom did you send?"

"My lieutenant and Flying Courier."

"His name, please?"

"Kirk Kendrick."

"He had been a soldier at the fort, I believe?"

"Yes, he was the Flying Courier there."

"And deserted?"

"Yes."

"To join you?"

"You seem thoroughly posted, madam."

"He is under sentence of death at the fort, for deserting, carrying off money intrusted to his care, as Flying Courier, and aiding you in his uniform, as a soldier, to get Frank Powell's wife into your power."

"Yes, he is under death-sentence, but so am I and all my band of Red Angels."

"And yet you sent him to the fort to find out what he could for your benefit?"

"Why not, for he is apt in disguises, and I have myself gone to the fort disguised and not been captured."

"That may be, for no one on this border can boast of having seen your face, so how could they know it when the mask is off?"

"Let us discuss the danger you tell me threatens my captive, and, if you will not tell me who you are, at least return with me to my retreat."

"I will do that with pleasure."

"You do not fear me then?"

"Not in the least."

"You are a strange woman."

"I am a strange man," was the low reply.

"Man?"

"Yes."

"By the cloud-capped Rockies, but you are my courier, Kirk Kendrick!" cried Captain Kit excitedly.

"Yes, I am Kirk Kendrick," was the calm reply.

"Who would have dreamed that you were a man?"

"Yet you have seen me in the feminine garb before!"

"True, but you were in mourning then, wore a veil, and had black hair."

"Yes, I have a black wig as well as a blonde one."

"And are the most thorough adept at disguises I ever saw. Why your face does not look the same, and your voice is different from what it was when I took you, disguised as a woman, from the stage-coach."

"Yes, I was born an actor, and should have taken to the stage instead of a counting-room, and then might have been an honest man today, for temptation would not have been placed in my way, and thus lured me to ruin," answered the disguised young man, sadly.

Then he added quickly, as though anxious to drop the subject:

"But, let me tell you how I come in this garb."

"I certainly shall be delighted to know."

"You sent me to find out all that I could of news and movements at the fort, and I knew it would cost me my life unless I went wholly disguised. So I looked over my rig, got out this disguise, and then went to Stage Station Number Five and waited for the coach. I told the station-tender that I wished to catch the coach there, and that my husband had a ranch forty miles away. I went on with the coach to the fort, asked to see Major Benteen, the commandant, and told him I was on the search for my husband, who, I had reason to believe, had enlisted in the army under an assumed name."

"Of course I was given a look at all the soldiers, was treated most kindly, and after a day and night there, left in the stage for Station Five. I there got my horse and started to look you up, when I came across your trail, and met the two men who were with you, and whom you sent off on a spying expedition. I told them who I was, and they told me that I could overtake you if I rode hard."

"And you did; but what did you discover at the fort, Kendrick?"

"Just what I told you."

"That the Powells intended to go to the rescue of Janette?"

"Yes."

"But how did they know where she was?"

"Will Powell, Broncho Bill, was coming from his ranch when he struck the trail you made, going to the retreat, and following it, made the discovery."

"Curses!"

"Oh, it will require acts, not curses to save your captive now, for my room was near the major's, and I heard the Powells plot to go and rescue the girl."

"Alone?"

"Yes; for Surgeon Powell refused the soldiers the major offered him."

"Then they mean business, and I must act at once."

"If you wish to save your captive."

"True, for they are men who would be hard to beat off."

"But you have forewarned me, Kendrick, and I will be ready for them. Now, as your horse is not very fresh, you go to the Platte, at our old camp, and there you will find the two men you met. Tell them to go with you to the retreat, as quickly as you can get there, and if you find me gone, follow me, for I will leave a trail of my old signs, which you know. But you had better get out of that rig of a woman."

"Not until I get out of this neighborhood, where I am liable to run upon soldiers. If I do I can play the lost female, and get them to carry me back to Station Five. If I get caught as Kirk Kendrick, they would take me to the fort and shoot me."

"You are right."

"I know it, and I'm too big a coward to die. But don't delay, if you wish to surprise Surgeon Powell and his brothers, instead of being surprised."

"True, I will be off, but hope to see you in a few days again, and can then tell you, I hope, that the Powell brothers have gone under."

"They'll die hard."

"I know it, but they are human and therefore vulnerable."

With this the bandit chief rode rapidly away, going back on the trail over which he had come, while the Flying Courier, in his remarkable disguise as a woman, rode on toward the Platte, allowing his horse to choose his own gait.

CHAPTER III.

THE BANDIT AND HIS VICTIM.

IN a wild and picturesque canyon of the Colorado Hills still stands an old log cabin.

Years ago it was built by Captain Kit, when he was prospecting for gold, as he said, or hiding away from justice, and for a year or more it had been his home.

He had chosen a secure location, at the end of the canyon penetrating back into the center of a mass of rugged, overhanging hills, almost inaccessible to the foot of man.

The ravine was half a mile in length, from fifty feet to a hundred in width, and its sides were precipitous, and rose to the height, at the rear end, of nearly ninety feet.

Along the sides, at their base, grew a few

stunted trees here and there, and at the end was the cabin, where a growth of small timber sheltered it.

A generous spring in the hills sent its waters trickling over the canyon cliffs just back of the cabin, forming a deep pool there, and a rivulet ran its way to the valley half a mile beyond.

One passing near, would little dream, when he beheld the break in the rugged hills that marked the canyon, that it penetrated so far back and was of such dimensions.

Into this lone retreat I would have the reader accompany me, for with the prerogative of a writer, I must drag the one who follows my pen-trail, into all kinds of scenes, prairie paths, mountain tracks, and dangers, not to speak of the very exceptionable company I must often ask him to associate with.

The cabin door is open, for it is in the afternoon, though the sunlight has left the valley and only gilds the hill-tops.

In the door stands what appears to be a maiden of nineteen, but who is in reality two years younger.

She is dressed in a neat riding-habit, the skirt being looped up to make a walking-dress of it, and her form is the perfection of grace and beauty.

Her face is a study in its loveliness, and yet about it is resolution and high courage.

The eyes are fringed by long lashes, and are full of fire, the lips ruby red, the teeth perfect, and her hair, golden-red, is one mass of curls.

She is watching, as she stands there, a huge negro, engaged in cooking the evening meal over a large fire that has been built in front of a large Indian tepee.

The negro is dressed in buckskin leggings and moccasins, wears a red flannel shirt and wide-rimmed sombrero of black, with a pair of red wings painted not inartistically upon the flap. He is considerably over six feet in height, with massive shoulders, brawny arms, and the look of a Hercules. His movements, however, are not heavy, as might be expected of a heavy man; but, on the contrary, quick, graceful, and his touch gentle, as can be seen by the manner in which he performs his culinary duties without other kitchen than the open air.

He has numerous pots, pans and other cooking utensils, which he is making good use of, and his table has been set with a snowy cloth, and, remarkable to relate, a great deal of real silver service.

Before the fire is a turkey roasting, flanked by prairie-chickens, broiling, a venison steak, and a few potatoes in the ashes.

Then there is a pot of coffee, and in a skillet some snowy biscuits, all together enough to tempt the veriest epicure.

"Supper ready, missy," said the negro, as he poured the coffee into the solid silver urn, and put the last plate of edibles upon the table.

"And I am ready for supper, Brick," remarked the maiden, advancing toward the table.

"Here Massa Chief!" said the negro as just then a horseman came at a gallop up the canyon and halted a hundred feet below, where a line of tepees, five in number, stretched across from side to side, blocking the way.

About the tepees, before a couple of fires, half a score of men were visible, several of them cooking their evening meal, but at the approach of the horseman they all arose and saluted him politely.

The new-comer tossed his bridle-rein to one of the men, and came rapidly along on foot to the little supper-table, a shadow falling over the face of the maiden at his approach.

It was Captain Kit, the bandit chief, whom the reader last saw upon the prairie with Kirk Kendrick.

Still wearing his mask of crimson wings, he raised his sombrero politely and said:

"Good-evening, Mrs. Monkton, and I hope I find you well?"

"I am well, sir, but I frankly confess disappointed at seeing you instead of—"

"Your husband?" he said.

"The one whom you tell me is my husband, sir, and whom I expected."

"My dear lady, my esteemed friend, Mr. Monkton, was detained, and sent me in his stead. But I have ridden far, am fatigued, but more hungry, and if you will allow me to partake of a part of the very delicious supper, which I see Brick has prepared for you, I will be better able to talk with you."

"I am your guest, sir, and the host cannot certainly be refused a seat at his own table," she answered, haughtily.

"Then I shall join you with pleasure, and my excuse for intruding upon you I will explain."

"Another plate, Brick."

"Yes, massa."

"And, Brick, get our traps together, for we must leave within the hour."

"Strike de tepee, sah?"

"No, leave that standing, but get my personal traps together and yours; then tell Denver Dave and Bonanza Bill to be ready to go with me, and to have three of the best horses ready for pack-animals."

"Yas, sah."

And, as the negro, after serving the supper,

walked away upon his errand, Captain Kit continued:

"And I must ask you to accompany me, my dear lady."

"Where to?"

"To meet your husband."

"Will he not come here?" she asked, anxiously.

"No."

"He promised me that he would."

"He will be unable to keep that promise, for he has been called to the mines by important business, and begged, as I was good enough to kidnap you for him, that I would escort you to him where he now is."

"Ah me! I had better be dead than as I am," she sighed.

"Why so? Are you not beautiful? Have you not a loving husband in Paul Monkton, and is not the future brightening before you?"

"You paint a glowing picture, sir, but all is sunshine in it," she said, bitterly, and then went on:

"Let me put the shades as well as the lights in it. You say I should be happy. A few years ago I was, for I had a happy home, an indulgent, loving father, and all seemed joy to me then; but one whom I loved, and my father trusted, ruined us by speculations; yet we did not blame him as he was inveigled into it by my father's confidential clerk, Kirk Kendrick, a man who looked like a woman but who possessed the heart of a devil."

"Yes, he aided me in kidnapping you for your husband, and, having deserted from the army, is now my courier."

Without apparently noticing the interruption, she went on:

"My father, with what was left from the wreck of his fortune, came West, when you murdered him."

"That is a harsh word, lady."

"It is a true one, for you, with your outlaw band, attacked our train, and my father, wounded unto death, fled on horseback with me. He fell from his horse, dying upon the prairie, and I would have fallen into your power but for the bravery of Doctor Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout, who saved me, and sent me to a prairie ranch where I found a home with, strange to say, the uncle of the young man my father had adopted as a son, and who unintentionally wrecked his fortunes."

"More remarkable to relate, this young man, Paul Monkton, had a ranch near by, and I met him again, and he was, as in the past, a brother to me; yet he saw that the Surgeon Powell loved me and that I, in deep gratitude returned that love, but said no word to prevent the intimacy between us."

"At last we were married, Frank Powell and I, and an hour after I was kidnapped by you and brought here."

"And here you brought Paul Monkton, and after you had told me the story of my life, told me that a girlish marriage I had entered into with him, my adopted brother was legal, while the one with Surgeon Powell was not."

"Then you permitted me to see Paul Monkton, who, you say, is your friend though you are an outlaw and he an honest man; and he told me he allowed me to go through a fictitious marriage, because he loved me and did not wish to make me unhappy, for he believed that I loved Surgeon Powell."

"I have, situated as I am, consented to give up that noble man, rather than have him bound to me by a marriage which the certificate you show me proves would not be legal, and to become the wife of Paul Monkton, to whom, I was bound in girlhood, yes, when I was just entering upon my teens."

"With this understanding, and the promise that I could write Surgeon Powell all, and then go far away from him, Paul Monkton, who, I am led to believe by you and him is my real husband, left me, to return in a few days and take me to my new home."

"Instead, you come back and say that you are to be my escort—that I must trust myself with one who bears the name of Captain Kit, the Hyena of the Overland."

"And more—you tell me that life is all sunshine for me and I should be happy."

"Oh no; after crushing the heart of Frank Powell as I have, though unintentionally, life's sunshine is clouded, I assure you!"

The poor girl had spoken rapidly, and with intense feeling, riveting the attention of the outlaw throughout.

When she had ceased speaking, he said:

"All that you have told me, lady, I already know; but I listened, because you seemed to wish to recall the bitterness of the past, rather than hope for joy in the future."

"As for your husband, I have told you that he bade me be your escort, and I have come for that purpose. A bandit I am, but you can wholly trust me, as Paul Monkton does."

"But why can I not remain here until he comes for me?"

"I will frankly tell you that it is because Surgeon Frank Powell and his brothers, Night Hawk and Broncho Bill, have learned of this retreat, and are now on their way to rescue you."

"Oh God have mercy! Quick, let us depart at once, for well I know that these men will rescue me or die before my eyes, and Heaven spare me that sight! Let us be off, for even now they may be upon us!"

She sprang to her feet, her face deathly white, and her frame trembling, and the bandit chief was only too glad to hurry her off, and in less than a half hour rode out of the canyon by her side, an escort of two men, Brick, the black bravo, and three led horses following behind.

As he left the canyon, the treacherous outlaw leader looked back and uttered to himself:

"Ha! ha! Frank Powell, I leave a trap for you and your brave brothers to fall into, for though I do not warn my own men, they are the best in my band, and will not be caught napping, and well I know that it will be a fight to the death, and so I want it, for my days as the Red Angel chief end with the going down of yonder sun, and henceforth *I live for love and gold!*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT SURPRISE.

SEVERAL days have passed away since the flight of Captain Kit from his cabin in the canyon, bearing with him the maiden whom he had so securely in his power.

It is again near the sunset hour, and a man, rifle in hand, rides slowly into the entrance of the canyon.

Both horse and rider are well worthy of notice as were the outlaw rider and his steed.

The man is tall, and with the symmetry of an Apollo, yet the form of a Hercules, for from the top of his head poised haughtily above his shoulders, to the tips of his small hand and feet he appears the very acme of strength and agility.

He is clad in the uniform of an army surgeon of a brigade, and wears in his black sombrero a black plume, while a gold cord with acorn tips serves as a band, and an ivory pin in the form of a white beaver, and a pair of gold crossed sabers, ornament the flap in front.

His pants are stuck in morocco-top cavalry boots, the heels of the latter being armed with massive gold spurs, and about his waist is a handsome belt, in which are revolvers and a bowie-knife that hangs to his sword-straps.

In his hands he carries a repeating-rifle ready for use, and his black eyes take in every object in the canyon on either side as he rides slowly along.

The face of the man is darkly bronzed, his hair black, waving and falling below his shoulders, though it does not give to his face the effeminate look which long locks do to most men.

A handsome face it is, full of power mingled with gentleness, and reflecting a noble heart and great brain.

The eyes now have a saddened, somewhat anxious look, and the mouth, half-shaded by a dark mustache, is stern and set.

The horse is a buckskin in color and with a snow-white mane and tail. He has the look of a runner—one that can keep the pace untiringly.

He steps along with a dainty tread, as though proud of his handsome saddle and trappings, and with still greater pride in his master.

Suddenly the horse snorts wildly, but a word from his master in chiding checks him.

"No, no, Yellow Jacket, you must not do that, for if we have foes up the canyon you will warn them, and get a bullet as a welcome. Go slow and let us see what it is disturbs you."

After a short halt the animal moved on again, and upon turning a bend in the canyon, a strange sight was visible, for here, there, and along back toward a row of tepees in the distance were human bodies, from the side of which skulked whining away a pack of hungry coyotes.

"Ah, me! it is sad to see even an enemy torn to pieces by wild beasts, and I should have buried them the other day; but then I was anxious to get to the fort with my wounded brothers."

Then, patting his horse, he continued:

"Go on, Jacket; for you are certainly not afraid of dead men and live coyotes, and there is nothing more to fear here."

The horse again moved up the canyon, shying away from the bodies of the four half-devoured men that lay scattered along the trail, and his master drew rein at the line of tepees that stretched across his path.

The tepees were deserted, and beyond was the cabin where the reader last beheld the captive of Captain Kit.

Up to this he went, the coyotes retreating yelping before him, until he disappeared in the door, and then, as there was no exit for them up the canyon, they darted in affright to seek safety from their natural enemy, man.

The cabin was deserted, and so was the single tepee that stood near it, while the camp-fires were cold, showing that they had not been lighted for several days.

"I will bury those bodies, as I have some daylight left yet," muttered the man, and unsaddling his horse, he gave him a drink at the spring, and turned him loose to feed upon the scanty grass here and there visible.

Then he pulled down the tepee standing alone, and carrying it to the bodies of the dead, from

which he had to again drive the coyotes, he wrapped them in it, and placed them in a small wash in the canyon's side, throwing dirt upon them, which he loosened with his knife, until they were wholly covered and safe from the ravenous jaws of the wild beasts.

It was now nearly dark, and the stranger built a fire from the fagots left by the former occupants of the canyon, and cooked some game which he had hanging to his saddle, and boiled a tin cup of coffee.

After this frugal supper he lighted a cigar, and staked his horse out beyond the cabin, and then wrapping himself in his blanket, lay down to sleep just within the door, which he left wide open.

The few fagots which he had made a fire of soon burned out, and the coals died away, until by midnight, the canyon was dark and seemingly tenantless, for the claybank steed had eaten his fill and also laid down to rest.

Suddenly the sound of hoof-falls were heard upon the hard ground far down the canyon, and the echoes rumbled up toward the cabin.

Behind the little structure Yellow Jacket had taken up his quarters, knowing that his master was within, and his quick ears caught the sound and instantly he gave a snort of warning.

"Ah, Jacket, good horse, you are on guard I see, good fellow," replied the man, rising quickly, as he heard the sound.

"Yes, they are coming this way, and, if I had not before heard what the echoes of this canyon would do, I would believe there were a dozen of them. But, there are at least three or four. Who can they be? Some of the Red Angel band, I guess, and perhaps that fiend, Captain Hyena himself, coming back, after taking Janette to a place of safety.

"Well, whoever they may be, and how many, they will find this place occupied," and he sat down upon the little cot, revolvers in hand and his rifle by his side to greet whoever might come.

The canyon was very dark, for its high cliff-sides cast a deep gloom between them, though the stars shone brightly overhead, and the hill-tops could be distinctly seen.

Still there was light enough for the watcher in the cabin to see three horsemen come in sight.

"Those are all," he said, with the utmost complacency, as though to meet three men was of little matter.

Straight up to the line of tepees they rode, and here they went into single file, to pass through the two center ones.

Two then came straight on toward the cabin, while one came to a halt.

"Ah! I was in hopes the three would come together," muttered the watcher.

"Ho, cap'n, ther place are as deserted as a turkey-coop arter Christmas," called out one of the two in advance, evidently addressing the one who had halted at the tepees.

"Yas, thar hain't a pilgrim here, an' we can't do nothin' trailing 'em until daylight comes," said the other.

"Wal, we kin bunk in ther cabing until day, pard, an' maybe we kin find a letter they hes wrote us," and the speaker and his comrade drew rein just in front of the cabin, when, suddenly, like an apparition from the grave, the tall form of the watcher stepped out before them, revolvers in hand, and cried sternly:

"Gentlemen, you are my guests! Dismount!"

"Ther Surgeon Scout!"

"Ther Wizard Doctor!"

CHAPTER V.

THE WIZARD DOCTOR.

THE cries came almost in a chorus from the lips of the two men who had ridden up to the cabin in the canyon, and their horses, seemingly as startled as their riders, wheeled simultaneously to dart away.

Then, in quick succession came two shots, and down went a rider from his saddle, while the horse of the other bounded into the air and fell heavily.

The fallen horse pinned his rider beneath him, and the one, whom the two men had recognized, even in the darkness, as Frank Powell, the Doctor Scout, was bending over him in an instant, and had torn from his waist his belt of arms, while he said sternly:

"Your horse will keep you down until my return, my man, and then I wish to see you."

With this he bounded down toward the tepees, where the horse of the second man had fallen, seized his bridle-rein, and throwing himself into the saddle, rode off at full speed in pursuit of the third horseman, who had halted and not approached the cabin.

That individual had been very quick to see that his comrades had gotten into trouble; and discovering that the cabin was not deserted, as they had believed, he threw himself on the back of his horse, for he had dismounted, and went down the ravine at a pace that showed his earnest desire to get away from the spot.

He had perhaps a hundred yards the start of his pursuer, and as he went flying along, the clattering hoofs sending out a thousand echoes, a pack of coyotes, which had come sniffing up the canyon to look up the feast they had been

driven from, went scurrying before him with angry yelps.

Behind him came the Surgeon Scout, a relentless pursuer, and he raked the flanks of the horse he had pressed into service without mercy in his desire to capture one whom he believed none other than Captain Kit, the Red Angel Chief of the Overland Trail.

But once the fugitive reached the end of the canyon, the fall of his horse's hoofs gave back no rattle as they fell upon the sod of the valley, and furthermore, his was a fleetier animal than the one on his track, and had rather gained upon him.

Arriving at the end of the canyon, the Surgeon Scout had halted to catch the sound of the hoofs, but only a dull thud reached his ears, and before he could catch its direction, the sound had ceased entirely.

"Another time, Captain Hyena," muttered Frank Powell hoarsely, and wheeling his horse, as he realized the utter uselessness of throwing away time there, he started back up the canyon at a gallop.

He found his prisoner where he had left him, pinned down by the dead horse that lay upon one leg; but if he had had a short while longer, he would have been able to free himself, though every effort gave him pain.

"I guesses yer didn't catch ther cap'n," he said, as Frank Powell dismounted.

"No, but some day or night I will."

"Waal, I wish yer had, fer it would hev give me time ter hev worked my leg free, an' I'd hev skipped, ef ther bone hain't broke."

"Let me see if it is," and with an effort of his great strength, the Surgeon Scout raised the body of the horse from off the leg.

"Now, my man, I will build a fire and then have a talk with you, for I wish to get a look at your villainous face."

"I recognized your cut in the dark."

"So I observed, as you called me by name."

"Oh! I hes heerd your voice afore, an' know'd it. It ar' gentle as a woman's voice, but then it hev got the trumpet ring in it, too; but I kinder know'd yer ginerall outline, and so did Belt."

"Your companion, there?"

"Yas, his name are Belt."

"Or was, for he is dead."

"Thet are sart'in, when *you* pulled on him."

While talking, the man still lay upon the ground, while the Surgeon Scout was building the fire.

When a bright blaze started up, illuminating the canyon, the surgeon approached the recumbent outlaw, and lifting him as he would a child, placed him nearer the fire. Then he examined the limb, and said, simply:

"Badly bruised by the fall and benumbed by the weight, but no bones broken."

"I guesses you is glad, so I kin be swung up," sullenly muttered the outlaw.

"I spared you and shot your horse, that I might have a talk with you."

"I w'u'dn't be surprised ef my pard there were the best off, fer he tarning up his toes without a word, an' I'm thinkin' I'll be hanged."

"You well deserve it, certainly; but I'll make a bargain with you for your life."

"Does yer mean it, Pard Doc?"

"I do."

"Waal, I knows yer word is as good as gold-dust, an' I'll do all yer says ter keep my clutch onter life," eagerly said the man.

"You have but to obey me, and, as I do not wish to shoot you, and have no time to take you to the fort to be hanged, I will let you go."

"Will yer?"

"Yes."

"Jist recite yer catechism an' let me respond ter ther same."

"In the first place, where are you just from?"

"Up on ther Platte."

"Be careful."

"Hain't I keeful when I are talkin' fer life?"

"Then tell me where you are just from?"

"Doc, we was jist from our old camp on ther Platte, an' come here ter j'ine, ther cap'n, but found him gone."

"I guess you had better be hanged, for I will take you to the fort, as you cannot tell the truth."

"Now, Doc, don't be hard on a poor devil as is down, fer I tells yer the truth, as yer kin see by jist takin' our trail in ther mornin' an' find out fer yerself, fer you is said ter be ther King Bee Trailer on these plains."

"What were you doing on the Platte?"

"We went thar accordin' ter ther cap'n's orders, fer he were ter j'ine us thar."

"Who went there?"

"Me an' thet galoot thar with his toes tarning up."

"And the captain joined you there?"

"No, Doc, but the loot'nent did."

"What lieutenant?"

"Ther man thet jist humped down ther canyon same as ef ther devil were arter him—an' I guesses he were."

The last five words were spoken in a low voice, for they were not intended for the surgeon's ear.

"Look here, my man, you called the one who was with you, and who escaped, captain, for I heard you so address him as you rode up."

"Fact, Pard Doctor, but I called him cap'n ter tickle him, but he are only ther next ter ther chief."

"Who is he?"

"You knows him."

"What is his name?"

"He were ther Flying Courier at ther fort, and they calls him Kirk Kendrick."

"Ah! that accursed deserter?"

"Yas, Doc, the very cuss."

"I am as anxious to capture him as I am your chief."

"Waal, they has sarved you shabby."

"I'll meet them some day."

"I'm bettin' on you when yer does, Doc."

"And I expect you to guide me to where your chief is."

"Lordy, Doc, I dunno no more whar he is than you does."

"You mean it?"

"Indeed I does, for I 'xpected ter find him here."

Frank Powell sprung to his feet and began to pace to and fro in deep thought, while his prisoner watched him as a murderer might watch the faces of the jury upon whom his life depended.

CHAPTER VI.

STARTING ON THE LONG TRAIL.

AFTER a few moments of fearful suspense to the outlaw captive, Frank Powell again turned to his prisoner and asked:

"Does that deserter know where to find your chief?"

"Not unless he left some word, or sign here, Doc, fer he expected ter meet ther cap'n in this canyon, an' not findin' him, were ter hev signs left ter foller him."

"Ah! can you read the signs?"

"Yas, Doc, when I sees 'em; but maybe you knows when ther chief left?"

"I do."

"Maybe you druv him away?"

"No, he left at sunset one evening, and carried off with him my wife."

"Yas, I knowed he hed stole her from you, or ther loot'nent stole her fer him."

"And both shall answer to me for it!" fiercely exclaimed the surgeon, while the prisoner remarked:

"And they was all gone when you comed here?"

"No, there were a few of the band left, but two had gone with the chief, and also that giant negro of his."

"Oh, cuss that nigger say I, fer, Doc, I does believe thet he are ther devil's imp, an' kin cast spells on a man ef he wants ter, fer he wears ther tail o' a black cat, human teeth an' bones, an' all sorts of charms sich as witches uses; but yer say some o' ther boys was here when you arrove?"

"Yes, ten or a dozen."

"No! Well, I thought thet I kinder inhaled cold meat around. Yer got away with some o' ther boys, I guesses."

"We did not kill as many as we could have wished, but we did the country some service."

"Oh! thar was sojers with yer?"

"No, my two brothers."

"Night Hawk and Broncho Bill? And jist you three?"

"Just us three brothers."

"Waal, yer was wuss nor a reegimint of sojers; but does yer mean ter say yer cleaned out ther camp?"

"We attacked them; some fell and others fled."

"And you wasn't hurted?"

"I was not, but my two brothers were wounded."

"And is they in ther cabin?"

"No, I went with them to the fort, carrying the horses of your comrades with us, and I only returned to-night, to wait here until morning, and take the trail of your chief, and to follow it to the end."

"Doc, ef I c'u'd help yer I would, for I minds ther time when ther cap'n were wounded, and you was his pris'nor—how you saved his life by extractin' ther bullet an' nussin' him, though yer did put ther shot inter him that yer took out. But yer treated him well, while yer stayed in camp, an' he played yer false arter he swore he'd let yer go."

"An' I minds, too, thet he hes run off with yer wife, an' ef I c'u'd tell yer whar yer'd find him, I'd do it."

Frank Powell gazed straight into the face of the man for an instant, and then said:

"I believe you, and I will let you go; but I advise you to lead a different life. In the morning I start on the trail of your chief, and I will leave you some game to live on, and in a couple of days you will be able to ride, and can take your comrade's horse and go where you will."

"Now I'll bathe and bandage your leg for you, and you can then look after yourself, and bury the body of your comrade in the morning."

The outlaw fairly choked up with emotion, so great were his joy and amazement at escaping, where he had fully expected no less than death.

"Pard Doc, my name are Ned Sykes, Wicked Ned ther pards calls me, but don't you forgit it thet I are your friend wharever you pick me up, drunk or sober, honest or stealin'," and the voice of the man quivered as he spoke.

Frank Powell made no reply, but quietly set to work bathing the bruised leg and bandaging it as tenderly and well as he would have done for a friend.

Then he placed him on a cot in the cabin, gave him his belt of arms and some provisions, and saddling Yellow Jacket, rode down the canyon in the darkness, followed by an earnest farewell from Wicked Ned.

Turning to the right upon leaving the canyon, the Surgeon Scout soon reached a small and fertile valley, where, in a sheltered nook, he came upon a horse staked out.

"Well, Brandy, did you think Yellow Jacket and I had deserted you? Not a bit of it! We went into camp up in the canyon, and didn't find it pleasant there, so came back to join you," and the Surgeon Scout patted the horse affectionately, and after unsaddling Yellow Jacket, and staking him out, he again sought repose for himself.

The break of day awoke him, and building a fire he cooked and ate a hearty breakfast, after which he placed a small pack, containing provisions, ammunition and a couple of extra blankets, upon Yellow Jacket, and mounting Brandy himself, set off on a trail that he took up from the mouth of the canyon, and which led toward the deeper wilds of Colorado.

CHAPTER VII.

"SIGNS" ON THE TRAIL.

THE trail that Frank Powell was following was a strange one.

There was no regular track but the trace of where eight horses had gone along, and these hoof-marks had nearly been obliterated, as days had passed since they had been made.

Then there was one track that was better defined, and seemed to have been made some little time later, while often it was seen that it veered off to one side, free of the others.

Now and then a little hole was dug in the ground, just as though made with a knife-point; and this was invariably seen where the nature of the ground rendered the trails of the first that had gone that way wholly invisible, and the last, the single track, almost so.

It was very plain that some one ahead of the Surgeon Scout had taken particular pains to leave a well-defined trail, that whoever followed would lose no time in searching for it when distinct.

On this account Frank Powell was able to follow at a fair pace the tracks, and he had put a number of miles behind him when noonday came, and he halted for rest and dinner.

An hour of rest, and mounting Yellow Jacket, and transferring the pack to the pack of Brandy, he was again on the trail, which seemed to grow more distinct as he rode along.

At the ravine, where he could no longer trace the tracks, even though walking on foot himself, and bending over, he once more halted and went into camp for the night, grooming his horses, and looking to their comfort, before he thought of his own.

It was a sad sight, that heart-aching man following that faint trail. Though it might not bring back to him his lost bride, it would certainly bring him revenge upon those who had wronged him so bitterly.

Janette Joslyn, the beautiful girl-woman, as she was, had won his heart from the time that he came upon her kneeling by the side of her dying father, out upon the open, moonlit prairie, and keeping at bay several Red Angels, as the outlaw band were called.

She had said he was as a brother to her, for he had sent her to the home of old Major Monkton, a friend of his, and who dwelt on his ranch, surrounded by the faithful negroes, who, once his slaves, had followed their master to the "land of the setting sun."

Paul Monkton, the old major's sister's child, had appeared upon the scene as a young ranchero, settling some twenty miles from where his uncle lived, and he had proven to be Janette's adopted brother, who, by speculation, had wrecked her father's fortune, and having been forgiven, had set forth to make riches to return them to his noble benefactor, he had said.

In those days, when Janette was in her thirteenth year, and Paul Monkton a man, petted and sought after in society, the girl's heart had gone forth to him with its first love passion.

Then four years had passed, and she had not seen him until they met upon the prairies of Nebraska.

When they thus met she was the promised wife of Frank Powell; but Paul Monkton had seemed the friend of the Surgeon Scout, and calmly stood by and saw her wedded to him by the fort chaplain.

Called away upon a false errand, soon after the ceremony, through a plot of Captain Kit, the Red Angel outlaw, Frank Powell had not seen his bride since, for she had been stolen from him and carried to the retreat in the canyon, where the chief told her that he had served

Paul Monkton, her real husband, as the words of the maiden had made known.

Thus matters stood at the time when Frank Powell took the trail of the outlaw chief, to follow it to the death.

In this outlaw band there was one who had, though said to possess a devil's heart, a friendship for the Surgeon Scout, and this man the reader will meet in the following chapter, and, though uncouth in appearance, desperate in character, and one whose just deserts should be the gallows, he will find him worthy of admiration, if not respect.

And this man was the one who was leaving "signs" on the trail that the Surgeon Scout might come the more swiftly on in pursuit, and not be delayed by searching for the tracks where the nature of the ground or the wind had obscured them.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEAD KNIFE JIM AS A TRAILER.

A HORSEMAN was riding slowly along over a trail that was leading through the mountain region of Colorado, and not very far from the South Platte River.

The horse and rider both looked as though they had been hard pressed, for the former was gaunt, carried his head low, and needed an occasional urging from his master's heels.

The rider had a wearied look, and yet had one of those faces that defy all efforts of the reader of human nature to understand, for whether he was greatly fatigued, or only looked it, it was hard to tell.

He was a tall man, bony and sinewy, and had no surplus flesh upon him.

His face was covered with a short beard, his eyes deep sunken, but bright as diamonds, and as restless as a bird's; but there was that in his face to distrust and fear.

Dressed in buckskin, he wore also boots and a sombrero, and carried his worldly goods rolled in a package behind his saddle.

A belt with three revolvers and two knives completed his armament, the latter being strangely unlike, for one was an enormous butcher-knife, the other a gold-hilted, gem-studded bowie, on which was engraven, in artistic letters:

"DEAD KNIFE JIM, OF KANSAS."

Another thing about the man that would attract attention, besides his "arsenal" was that he had but one arm, the right sleeve being empty, and the wristband pinned up on his back.

Presently, as he rode along, he came to a clear rivulet crossing his path, and upon the side of it was the remains of a camp-fire, the fagots still burning.

"Here we'll camp fer dinner, Whalebone, an' it won't do you no harm ter git a hour's rest and some o' this green grass, while ye kin jam yer nose down inter thet water ter cool it."

With this he dismounted and turned his horse loose, as though he had no fear of his running off from him, or a dread of foes, although he knew he was in a dangerous country.

The horse took a good roll, then drank a good draught at the spring, and, lying down in a patch of tempting grass began to "kill two birds with one stone," so to speak, for he rested his weary legs and cropped mouthfuls of the juicy food about him.

"Waal, ef you ain't as eddicated as humans is, Whalebone, folks kin sit me down fer a travelin' missionary, fer thet are about the smartest leetle trick I ever seen did," said the man, as he gazed at the animal.

"Waal," he continued, "we kin afford ter rest here two hours, fer thar is whar them we is arter passed last night, an' we'll glide in on 'em in the'r camp ter-night, an' no mistake."

"They bes pushed on purty rapid, as though they thoughted thar might be music ahind 'em, an' I hes hed ter shove you hard, Whalebone, ter overtook 'em."

"But we is almost thar, an' I'm a-thinkin' thet Cap'n Kit are kinder gittin' to ther end o' his rope, an' I guesses a rope-end are ther end he'll hev, ef I don't kinder step off thet way myself."

"Waal, I are actin' squar' this time in sarvin' ther Doctor Pard, an' tryin' ter save ther leetle gal from ther cap'n."

"But then ther Doc are ther whitest pale-face I ever seen, an' I jist hitches my friendship onter him, ef he did break this arm o' mine with a bullet, an' then cut it off so slick arterwards."

"Waal, it were my fault, fer I w'u'd hev bed my knife inter his back in a second more, ef he hedn't did as he done."

"Now what excoose am I ter give Cap'n Kit fer follerin' him?"

"He are a terror on them as disobeys orders; but then, my orders was ter find him, an' I'll tell him I were lookin' fer him, c'u'dn't see him anywhar on ther prairie, so put back to ther retreat an' found thar was a ragin' fire o' mortality right in thet canyon."

"Then I lighted out on his trail, bein' ther only one o' ther boys left alive."

"Yas, that are ther lie I doctors up fer him,

an' ef it don't fit, then thar will hev ter be war between us."

The outlaw, still talking to himself or his horse the while, went about getting his dinner, which consisted of game he had shot during the morning.

Then he stretched himself down for a sleep, while Whalebone, seemingly fully rested, got up and went to eating.

The sun had counted two hours on its way when Dead Knife Jim awoke, and having slept longer than he intended, he hastily caught his horse, for the faithful animal had not wandered far from him, and set off at a canter on the trail which he had followed for several days.

At length the sun went down, and twilight was shutting the trail out of sight, so that Dead Knife Jim began to think he must pass another night alone, when afar off down the valley the glimmer of a light caught his searching eyes.

"Whalebone, does yer see thet camp-fire? Waal, it may be Injun, it may be Colorady road-agents, an' it may be ther cap'n, an' we hopes it are; but whatever it are, we goes ter see, so jist h'ist them weary legs o' yourn at a more lively gait, fer yer is gittin' as slow as molasses in winter, since I brung yer on this long trail. Does yer hearken unto me, Whalebone?"

Whether the horse understood his master's words, or caught sight of the light, I cannot tell, but certain it is that he moved down the valley at a pace that caused Dead Knife Jim to remark:

"Now this do seem like old times on ther pararers, Whalebone, for you is jist humpin' yerself."

A half-hour more and the trailer found himself benighted, for darkness surrounded him, and he was at the base of a high, heavily-timbered hill.

He had, however, kept his eyes upon the spot where he had seen the light glimmering, and though he had soon lost sight of it, he still held the position in his view; so, as he could not ride up the steep hillside, he dismounted and walked, leaving Whalebone to gather what comfort and grass he could below.

A climb of a couple of hundred yards, and he came out into what seemed to be a well-worn trail.

"Now this are jist sugar walkin' ter thet which I hev jist been hev'in'," he muttered.

Then he stood and tried to get the locality of where he had seen the light.

"This trail goes to it, I'm supposin', an' I'll jist stick to it fer luck."

So saying he turned to the left, which led further up the mountain, while to the right would have led him down grade.

He had not gone very far before he heard a burst of laughter in a man's voice.

"Funny, hain't it? But I likes fun, so I'll see what yer is laffin' at, tho' I is very confident I hain't on ther trail o' Cap'n Kit."

"Waal, some folks is near by, an' it hain't Injuns, as I knows by the'r laff; but I'll soon know all about 'em, ef a inquirin' mind kin find out suthin'."

Going on cautiously, Dead Knife Jim soon beheld a small cabin before him. One window-shutter was open, and through it the light had gleamed which had caught his eye a mile or more away.

Creeping up to the cabin he peered in, and what he saw fairly made him start and clutch his revolver, which he at once brought to a level at some one or something within the rude little structure.

CHAPTER IX.

DOG EAT DOG.

WHAT Dead Knife Jim saw in the cabin was nothing more than two men seated at a table.

But it was their occupation at the time that caused him to start.

They were rough-looking men, of a type that at once proclaimed them mountain desperadoes, and they were armed to the teeth, so to speak.

The cabin was a long one, fully thirty feet in length by ten in width, and along the walls were a dozen bunks which, as Dead Knife Jim ran his eye over them, seemed to be empty.

The cabin stood upon a ridge, with its back against overhanging rocks, while all about it was a thicket that hid it from view, excepting, as it happened, the glimmer of light from the window, which had caught the eyes of Dead Knife Jim.

A table stood in the end near the window, through which the intruder peeped, and upon it was a rush-light, brightening up the faces of the two men, and with its rays reflected from a pile of gold upon the board before those upon whom the gaze of Jim was fixed.

"Pard, I moves we take this heur little pile an' skips with it ter other diggin's, fer ef we robs our lifetime we kin never git no more than thar is here," said one of the speakers.

"Look here, Ben, I am a bad man, and have done many a wicked deed in my day, but I ain't bad enough to rob the man that put this bag of gold in my hands and says to me:

"Brad, here's a haul some gerloots got out o' a safe in Cheyenne, and I picked 'em up with the treasure and put 'em where they won't miss it or need it."

"I have counted it, Brad, and know just what is there in diamonds, gold, watches, jewelry and all, and I trust you to take it to the cabin and keep it for me, as I have to go with the other boys on a little frolic that will pay us well."

"That is what our chief said to me, Ben, and I have done as he said."

"That's no reason why we shouldn't git with it all," sulkily said the other.

"It is a reason, Ben, as the man who trusted me with all this gold and trinkets, saved me from the gallows years ago, and I'm not the one to go back on him."

"You talk like a girl, Brad, and you should do as I say. Ther cap'n has gone with all the boys clear up on ther Laramie trail, as you know, ter rob thet treasure stage thar hes been talk about."

"Now they won't be back fer several days, an' with them fine hosses in ther shanty back o' ther cabin, we kin git clear away with ther dust."

"So I says do it."

"No, Ben, yer can't tempt me ter rob thet man."

"It belongs ter all o' us."

"Well, we will get our share when he divides it; but I could not resist showing it to you."

"Lor, Brad, don't be a fool, fer we come here ter ther mines ter dig gold and silver dust, and make a fortin."

"Fortins hain't ter be had in every hole, we found, an' so we tuk to ther road-agent biz, an' thar is riches afore us thet w'u'd send us home wealthy, an' how we c'u'd put on frills."

"I cannot go home, Ben; I dare not; for there is a rope awaiting me there."

"Besides, this whole pile is not worth more than ten or twelve thousand dollars."

"Lordy! are it worth that much, Brad?"

"About that."

"Waal, waal, I never expected ter git so much money in my life, Brad."

"And take my word for it, Ben, you never will," said the other, with a light laugh.

"Yas, I will! Take thet!"

With the words came the flash of a revolver, and the man Brad dropped forward on the table, his arms spread protectingly over the gold he would not, robber that he was, steal from the one who had trusted him with it.

Ben, the assassin, who had committed this vile deed, now jumped up with the cry:

"Cuss yer, does yer intend ter dim ther glitter o' thet gold and di'mints with yer ornery bleed?"

"No, sir; yer was a durned fool ter not go shares, an' now I hes all, an' ef I don't be a peacock when I goes back home, then I don't know myself."

"They said I was a no-good boy, an' thet I was a wuss young man, an' thet I'd come ter no good end, while they was glad ter see me leave thet village when I did."

"But, oh, my! when I goes back rich, with my money which was dug out o' their mines, then I'll be a barrel-top an' a clover-blossom."

"I am sorry fer you, Brad; but yer ghost won't haunt me as long as I hes got yer gold."

With this he coolly threw the body from the chair, in which it still sat, letting it fall heavily upon the floor, and then he stood gloating over the treasure before him.

But somehow his eyes would rest upon two other objects, and he could not keep them off of them.

One of these was the body of the dead man at his feet, and the other was the open window.

At length, with a muttered oath, he said:

"Brad, I sees how it is."

"I are oneasy with you in here, so I'll jist take you out to ther cliff an' toss yer over an' ther fall won't hurt yer."

"Then I'll shut thet winder, fer somehow I kinder feel as though somebody were lookin' in on me."

"Arter thet I kin count my fortin', and then light out fer parts far from here, and I don't want ter lose no time about it nuther."

With this he stepped to the window and closed the shutter with a sudden bang and bolted it.

"My! but it did seem ter me somebody was a-lookin' at me."

"Kin I be gittin' shaky in the narves?"

"I hes kilt folks afore an' it didn't r'ile me any; but, somehow, ther memory o' Brad kinder stirs up my feelin's."

"Come, Brad, you must go over ther cliff, an' then I'll feel some better."

"Yer a heavy weight, but I kin carry you."

"But must I leave ther gold thar?"

"I guesses so, fer thar hain't nobody here ter trouble it, an' it are only a step ter ther cliff."

"Now, Brad, I bids yer farewell, as soon as I sees ef yer hain't got some leetle walubles about yer thet yer didn't mention."

The body was then coolly searched, and all that was of any value upon it was appropriated and laid upon the table for future reference by the assassin.

Then he raised it in his arms and walked to the door with his heavy load.

The door just then flew open, and the assassin started back in horror, still holding the body, as Dead Knife Jim stood before him and said:

"Pard, you shot him fer his gold, an' I intends ter knife you fer yourn."

CHAPTER X.

A FIGHT FOR A FORTUNE.

If he had seen the counterpart of the dead man he carried in his arms, appearing as a ghost before him, the robber and assassin, Ben, could not have been more awed than at sight of Devil Jim—or Dead Knife Jim, for he went by both names among his comrades and deserved both—suddenly confronting him.

He seemed not even to have the power to drop the dead body he held, but clutched it convulsively, holding it as a shield before him, while from between his chattering teeth came the query:

"Who is yer?"

"Devil Jim them calls me as knows me best," was the serene answer.

"Whar is yer from?"

"Everywhar an' anywhar; but I am at home jist here, now, fer I likes ther place, tho' I can't say so much fer ther comp'ny, but thet won't trouble me long," and Devil Jim winked at the trembling man, who, determined to make a bold stand, said:

"Ef yer hain't got the password o' our band yer is in danger here, as ther cap'n an' his boys is comin', fer I heerd 'em in ther valley."

"You is a howlin image o' falsehood, young feller, fer I knows thet yer cap'n an' his men is up on ther Cheyenne trail, an' you hes jist kilt thet poor devil thar to rob him of ther gold an' di'mints he w'u'dn't steal from his friend."

"No, sir, you will never enjoy 'em, fer I is heir o' ther cold meat yer holds in yer arms."

"Would you rob me?" whined the man.

"I c'u'dn't rob yer of what yer hasn't got."

"Ther treasure are thar on ther table, an' I hes stepped in ter rake it; but ef yer thinks it wuth while fightin' fer, yer jist hes ter draw yer shooter an' let fly at yours truly onto death."

But the man did not move a muscle, and still stood like a statue, holding the corpse.

"Hain't yer gettin' tired nursin' thet baby, pard? fer it do seem ter me thet he weighs all of one hundred an' eighty, an' dead folks grows heavy, yer know."

"Does yer intend ter rob me?" again whined the man, now wholly cowed.

"I intends ter take thet gold an' di'mints an' sich."

"Let me take out what belongs ter me, an' I'll give yer ther balance."

"Now yer is too gen'rous with other folks's fortunes, fer thar hain't none o' it belongs ter you; but I is tired o' wastin' time, an' must be goin', so jist stan' in thet thar corner ontill I gits out, fer I doesn't want ter kill yer, as I is tarnin' good o' late."

The man started to lay the body down, before he obeyed, when Devil Jim continued:

"Keep thet doll in yer arms, fer it are safer fer me."

The man turned and walked toward the corner, at the same time trying to get a better hold on the corpse, seemingly.

But this was a trick to clap his hand to his side and draw a revolver.

With a toss he threw the body up as a shield and wheeled, his revolver in hand.

"Aha! thet are clever," yelled Devil Jim, and as the revolver flashed he threw his knife.

The bullet missed its aim, but the knife buried itself to the hilt in the body of the dead man.

"I hes another knife, pard, an' here it are," shouted Devil Jim, hurling his second knife with the flash of the other's second shot.

The second bullet struck Devil Jim in the side, turning him half around with the shock, while his knife, thrown with deadly aim, buried itself in the heart of his foe, who had half-dropped the body he held.

Like an enraged tiger, Devil Jim then rushed upon the man, who stood a second, glancing at him, and then dropped dead, with the body of the man he had slain still clutched in his arms!

"He hev crossed the river, thet are sart'in; but maybe I are goin' ter foller him," muttered Devil Jim, as he ripped open his hunting-shirt and looked at the wound.

"It are in my right side, an' right whar my heart would be ef it were on this side o' my karkiss."

"It looks bad, but then I hain't easy kilt, an' maybe I'll git over it."

"Howsomever I'll jist gobble up ther fortin' thar, fasten onto them fine horses thet pilgrim said were in ther shanty, an' then strike ther back track ter meet ther Doc, who kin fetch me out if it kin be did."

With this the brave fellow—for he was brave, despite his villainy—bound up his wound as well as he could, helped himself to the treasure, picked up anything about the cabin that took his fancy, and then taking up the rush-light went out to the shanty that served as a stable.

It was just back of the cabin, and in it he discovered several splendid animals.

These he appropriated as coolly as he had everything else, and mounted one and leading the others, set out down the mountain trail.

It led to a stream, and upon the other bank no trail was visible, for high bluffs rose there.

"Oh! they takes to ther water here, they does."

"Waal, I guesses ther hosses knows ther way, so I'll let 'em show me."

With this, Devil Jim gave the horse he was riding the rein, and the animal turned into the stream and down it.

The water was knee-deep; but the animals seemed to know the bottom and kept along through the now high banks, first on one side, then on the other, as though following some under-water path where they knew there was a sure footing.

After half a mile they turned out of the stream into a broad trail that crossed it, and which was really a road for vehicles.

"I see, I see; them fellers is cute, an' hes a safe hidin' place; but now ter find Whalebone," and the outlaw, after a short search found his horse, and at once set off on the back trail.

He pushed on until he felt weak and worn out, and then he halted.

It was the same spot where he had camped at noonday, and he was not long in making himself comfortable with his own traps and those he had brought from the cabin.

"Waal, I may be lyin' down here ter die; but ef I does thet Doc will find my remains an' know thet I makes him my heir."

"This hole in my side stings like a hornet, but what it are goin' ter do wid me ther Lord only knows."

"Make yerself comf'table thar, critters, fer yer may not hev me ter lead yer ter water in ther mornin', tho' I hopes I shall, fer I doesn't want ter toes up now, jist as I is becomin' a leetle useful."

With this Devil Jim pressed his hand upon his wound, and within a short while sunk to sleep there in the darkness, alone, wounded, and whether dying or not he could not tell; but, come what might, his was a nature that would face it without a murmur or a tremor of fear.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "GOOD SAMARITAN" OF THE PLAINS.

ALONG the trail, so plainly marked for him with various signs by Devil Jim, rode Frank Powell, pressing his horses to all they could bear, in his speed to overtake the Red Angels, and riding the animals alternately that each should have an equal share of the work.

From the first glimmer of dawn, when he would be able to see the trail, to the last ray of light that allowed him a view of the track, he pressed on, with but two short halts during the day for rest, not for himself, but for his horses.

In this way he was enabled to travel at nearly double the speed at which the fugitives were going, who in turn were also being gained on, as the reader has seen, by Devil Jim, for Captain Kit, fearing no pursuit, was going at a pace that would not weary Janette, camping early, starting late, and halting for a couple of hours at noontime.

It was toward evening of the day following the night when the fight for fortune took place, in the cabin on the mountains, that Frank Powell was riding along at his usual swinging pace, while the led horse trotted patiently behind.

He had seen that the trails were freshening rapidly, and felt confident from what he read of the signs, that Devil Jim had already overtaken the Red Angels and their captive.

"To-morrow night will bring me into the border of the mining-country, and then I will find them," he muttered.

A few moments after he said:

"Well, Jacket, what do you see? Danger ahead sure, if you prick up your ears like that. But, if it is that fiend, I shall be tempted to attack him, for Jim will be my friend, I know, and that will lessen the odds against me. Bah! there are only the chief, the negro, and two men, and I have faced greater odds often and still live; and in this good cause, for revenge is just in my case, I cannot fail of success. If I go under, then I will not go alone."

With this desperate resolve, he seated himself better in the saddle, looked to his arms and rode forward.

The object that had caught the eyes of Yellow Jacket, now became visible to the Surgeon Scout.

It was a horse moving in the distance, and barely discernible through the trees.

A closer approach showed two horses, and a moment after a third came in view.

"It is Jim's horse, and the others must belong to Captain Kit and his men."

"Evidently I am not seen; so I will try and get as near as possible before I am discovered."

Nearer and nearer the Surgeon Scout rode, and still he saw no one moving in the camp.

Nearer and nearer, until he could see but three horses, and they were staked out, and neighed delightedly at sight of him.

"What can it mean? Where is Jim?"

The question was answered as he rode up and beheld his one-armed ally prostrate upon his

blanket bed, which he had spread in the little bush wicky-up that the Red Angels had thrown up for the accommodation of Janette.

In fact, the surgeon had noticed these marks of care for the captive at every camping-ground of the outlaws.

"My poor fellow! do I find you hurt?" and Frank Powell was kneeling by the side of the prostrate one-arm outlaw.

"Doc, are it you, or yer ghost? Am I dead, an' in the devil's coop? No, I guesses I ain't thar, or you wouldn't be here; but I is burnin' up with fire, an' it do seem as if I were on ther red-hot gridiron they ust ter tell me about when I were a Sunday-school boy. I knows yer, Doc, though my head are full o' lightnin', an' I is sufferin' here."

As he spoke, rambling in delirium, he removed his hand from over the wound in his side.

"Wounded, by Heaven! But, Jim, I'll soon take care of you; so do not worry."

The hunting-shirt was quickly cut away, the case of instruments laid out, with bandages and medicines, and a little india-rubber basin filled with water from the brook.

The horses were fretting to be looked after, and neighing constantly, for even Whalebone considered himself neglected, and he was not one to worry; but then it was nearly forty-eight hours since they had been watered, and they had cropped the grass clean as far as their stake-ropes reached.

But with all this, Frank Powell sat down to examine the wound of Devil Jim.

To his practiced eye and skillful hands it was short work, and he held the bullet between his fingers, while he said:

"Glanced on the rib and ran around it to the back. Not even a severe wound for such a man, but then he has bled freely, and was out of condition—so fever has set in. Now to cure him."

This was said in a professional tone, as though he was giving his opinion aloud to some one who had asked it.

After skillfully dressing the wound and administering the proper medicine from his case, which he never went without any more than his weapons, and in fact wore it on his belt at his back, the Surgeon Scout fixed up the brush shelter, and then looked to the care of the horses.

It was now sunset, and as he stood gazing at the gilded hilltops, and listening to the delirious mutterings of the wounded man, he said, bitterly:

"Fate seems to lure me on but to bring new disappointments. A few hours ago I wished this suspense and sorrow would end one way or the other; now I find the man I depended upon down with a wound and high fever. His trail has gone further, and he has come back upon it. Has he met Captain Kit, been suspected of treachery, and had a combat, or has he been wounded by some one else? From his talk I can tell nothing; but I will not leave him here to die, anxious as I am to go on and end this terrible suspense."

"No, I will be as a Good Samaritan, and stay by the side of the man who has befriended me, for he is even now better, and I hope will be all right in a few days, as he will rally quickly as soon as I break his fever. Well, this is a dangerous locality to camp in, but I must face the consequences, as I will not leave poor Jim."

CHAPTER XII.

THE RED ANGEL'S STORY.

WHEN Devil Jim was overtaken by night, and went up the mountain in search of the light, Captain Kit was not a league ahead of him, encamped in a sheltered nook.

He had ridden into the spot about sunset, and the two men who accompanied him at once set to work to build a wicky-up for Janette.

This was soon done, while Brick, the negro, unpacked the traps from the led horses and set about getting supper.

As for Captain Kit he never worked, but stood about in deep thought or talked to Janette, who was wont to receive all his advances with extreme coldness.

She was not wearied by her long travel, but had an anxious look, and now asked, as the outlaw chief approached her:

"When does this trail end, sir?"

"To-morrow, Mrs. Monkton."

"Where?"

"In the mining country."

"You say that Mr. Monkton has interests there?"

"Yes, he staked out a claim some years ago, and now there have been several valuable veins found near, and he intends to set to work upon it."

"By the way he told me your father had a claim here."

"Father had a claim here, which he bought to help some poor man, but he paid only a small sum for it, and never thought it would amount to much, if anything."

"It is worth looking after anyhow, to know."

"So Mr. Monkton said."

"Has he the papers?"

"No; I have them."

"Yes; I believe you brought your things from Major Monkton's."

"I had little to bring—a sachel with a few papers in it of little importance, some money which I did ask the major to invest for me in cattle, but which he returned with the remark that Surgeon Powell would invest it for me to better advantage."

"These things, believing I was going to the fort, I gave to one of the supposed soldiers to carry; but finding him to be a Red Angel in disguise, I made him give them back to me, and so have them."

"When Paul looks over the papers he can tell you if they are of any value."

"Perhaps so, sir; but you think there is no doubt of my seeing him to-morrow?"

"None whatever."

"He will be at his mine?"

"Yes; and he told me he was anxious to have a cabin fixed up for your reception and to give you as good a welcome as was possible."

"He is very kind, and I hope all is as you say; but somehow I doubt you, Captain Hyena."

"Pray do not call me by that fearful name."

"Surgeon Powell calls you Captain Hyena," she said naively.

"Yes; and he will find me a hyena to deal with," almost ferociously said the outlaw chief.

But instantly he added, and in a gentle tone:

"But why do you doubt me, madam, may I ask?"

"Because you are ashamed to show your face."

"My dear lady, do you consider that a cause of doubt?"

"I do."

"I have a motive."

"True, fear."

"I am no coward, madam."

"Your acts have proven otherwise."

"Ha! do you say this to my face?"

"Certainly, for you are an outlaw—a man with a price set on his head for his crimes—a despoiler of homes—a murderer of the defenseless—in fact, Captain Hyena, I consider you worse than that red-skin chief, Wolf Fang, for it is untutored nature to kill; he has been reared to go upon the war-path, and the more scalps he gets, the greater brave he becomes."

"You have been taught otherwise."

"You are educated, refined when you wish to be, and you learned to lisp your prayers at a mother's knee who was proud of you, and hopeful that your career would be an honorable one."

"That mother's heart would break to know you as you are, if already you have not placed her in her grave by letting her know that her son was a human fiend."

"You murdered my father, and your wretches swept over us one awful night, which I shall never forget."

"You are as treacherous as a snake, and as cowardly as a worm."

"You mask the face that God has given you, and yet you ask me why I mistrust you."

"Yes, I do mistrust you, fear you, hate you, loathe you, and I will feel the same for Paul Monkton if he does not spurn you from him, give up your so-called friendship, and drive you from his home, if ever you dare to darken his doors."

Janette was fully aroused, for the fountain of her overcharged feelings had broken the dam of self-restraint, and swept forth in her cold, cutting, scathing words.

The man had stood like a statue before her. His heart heaved almost convulsively, but his face could not be seen, and what it revealed could not be read, for the crimson wings securely shielded it from view.

For a moment after she ceased speaking, he uttered no word; then he said, in a voice strangely soft and free from anger:

"Shall I tell you why I hide my face, lady?"

"I know."

"You think it is from fear?"

"I know it."

"You think it is because I fear to be recognized by those who know me; but that is not the reason."

"You have some deep motive."

"I have."

"Tell me it then."

"Shame!"

"I do not wonder at that; but your motive should be more than shame, it should be horror, for one with your guilty soul should dread to look himself in the face."

"You are severe."

"I am just."

"I hide my face for shame, as I said, as it is so hideous to mortal eye—"

"Bahl! you are of superb form; your hands and feet are shapely; your chin and mouth, as much as I can see of them, are perfect; still, I admit that your face may be hideous, but it is with the crime that is stamped thereon."

The tone and words of Janette were scathing, but they did not seem to provoke the outlaw chief to anger, for he continued, in the same gentle tone:

"My face is hideous, as I said, lady, and I will tell you why:

"I was reared in luxury, and had loving, indulgent parents, and a darling little sister"

"The more shame that you are now what you are."

"One day our home took fire, and that little sister was in an upper room. No one dared to go to her rescue; but I did so, seized her in my arms, wrapped a wet blanket about her, and then descended through the flames to safety."

"She was unharmed, and my hands and chin and mouth, buried in the blanket, were not burned; but, alas! the rest of my face was fairly roasted, and is now one hideous scar."

"And one who, as a boy, could do this brave deed, to become, when a man, what you are, is undeserving of pity."

"Nay; but you are harsh and merciless. I was so disfigured that people turned from me with horror. Those I loved seemed to loathe me; even my own sister could not bear the sight of me."

"I went to college, and my looks were a standing joke, and thus I went on until, in desperation one day I took the life of one who jeered at me. From that day I became an exile, a wanderer, and to-day am what I am."

He wheeled on his heel, and walked away, while Janette, deeply touched, said fervently:

"God have mercy upon him!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MINER'S HOME.

IN the depths of a large canyon, almost of dimensions sufficient to be called a valley, and nestling away beneath the shelter of high cliffs, stood a comfortable cabin.

It was perched upon a little knoll of green grass, and sheltered by trees that grew near it, while within a few steps of its door, a mountain brook went bounding along, its murmur constant and ever musical.

The patch upon which the cabin stood was an acre in size only, and with the smooth walls of the towering cliff, the canyon's sides, behind it, could be reached only across the mountain stream, which here was spanned by a rustic bridge of rude, but substantial workmanship.

To attempt to cross the stream, which was hardly sixty feet in width, other than by this bridge, would be for the boldest swimmer to lose his life upon the rocks, against which the waters dashed in foaming fury.

In the center of the stream, opposite the cabin was a rock island, upon which grew one large sycamore tree, and this, with another large pine tree upon the shore where stood the hut, were the supports for the bridge.

The latter consisted of two spans, a yard in width, and with a rough railing on either side while the foundation was two long hewn strips of scantling of ash, with ash boarding for the flooring.

One end rested upon the shore near the cabin; the other was drawn by ropes and blocks up into the tree, and lowered at will and with ease, until it rested upon the island.

There the second span was lowered in the same way to the other shore, and horse and rider could cross to the little bank beneath the cliffs; but it would be a bold man who would attempt to swim the stream with the aid of his horse or without, and the chances against success were a hundred to one.

The cabin and bridges had evidently been built a couple of years, for the stains of several seasons were upon them.

This lodge had three rooms of fair size, a board shelter in front, to serve as a roof for a porch, and a flooring of grass. There was a homelike look to it all that really was inviting.

A man sat in the doorway, and was leisurely smoking a pipe, while by his side were pick and shovel, as though he had just returned from work.

The face of the man was rough, and by no means winning, and he was armed with revolvers and a knife.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon something across the stream; then he sprang to his feet with the words:

"He are comin'!"

Though apparently convinced that some one whom he expected was coming, the man acted with caution, for he opened the cabin door and stepped inside.

From that position he kept his gaze fixed on a number of moving forms coming up the canyon. First appeared a negro, and behind him rode a horseman and horsewoman, while following these were two more mounted men leading three riderless horses.

The party was coming along at a swinging pace, as though animals and riders were glad that rest was near.

"It are them," said the man in the cabin, and he at once walked down to the bank of the stream.

"Hello, Jack, you are on hand, I see," called out Captain Kit, recognizing the man, as they drew rein on the other shore.

"Yas, cap'n, I are here," was the response.

"Lower away your bridge so that we can come over, for this lady has had a long ride and needs rest."

"Yas," simply said the man, and he was already grasping the rope that managed the fall of the bridge.

In a moment more, with apparent ease he

lowered the rustic walk until the other end rested upon the island before referred to and walking out to this he also let down the other span.

Instantly Captain Kit rode upon it, saying:

"I will go first, lady, and you follow; but one at a time, for this is not as strong as the Niagara Suspension Bridge."

Janette made no reply, but followed him across, and, refusing his proffered aid, sprung lightly to the ground.

"This is the cabin that is to be my home, I believe you said?" she asked, turning to the outlaw chief.

"It is, madam, as I understand it."

"And it is the home of Paul Monkton?"

"Yes."

"Then why is not my husband here to welcome his bride?" she said with sarcasm.

"I certainly expected that he would be, Mrs. Monkton, but it seems that he is not here."

"Ho, Jack!"

"Yes, cap'n."

"Where is Mr. Monkton?"

"He are up in the mount'ins huntin' game, fer he didn't spect yer so soon, an' wanted ter hev a grand supper fer ther leddy."

"Ah! he is very kind; we have come along rapidly," answered Janette, seemingly glad of an excuse found for his not giving her a welcome.

"Do you like this spot, madam?"

"The scenery is grand indeed, and this a most secluded, but picturesque nook, yet it has the appearance of being as strong as a fort," and Janette glanced at the strongly-built cabin and stable in the background, and asked:

"Is there no way of leaving this little retreat except by the bridge?"

"Only as a bird can by wing; but this is a dangerous country, and it is well to be safely housed, Mrs. Monkton."

"How does the claim pan out, Jack?"

"It is pannin' out better every day, sir, an' ef it keeps on Mr. Monkton won't hev ter keep ther pretty leddy livin' here very long."

Janette bowed at the compliment, and then entered the cabin.

It was large, strangely well-furnished for so wild a country, and Janette saw readily how she could make it a very comfortable abiding-place, if not a home for her, and the husband she was so strangely united to.

She soon found the room that was to be her own and when she reappeared, discovered that Jack had so well informed Brick of the mysteries and conveniences of the place that he was already at work cooking supper under the shed that served as summer kitchen and dining-room combined.

There was plenty of wood growing along the base of the cliff, and a huge pile in one place, as though it had been thrown over from the heavy forest that covered the heights above.

The stable was as securely built as the house, and altogether, Janette felt that she would at least feel safe there.

"Do you live here, my man?" she asked of the rough-looking specimen whom Captain Kit had addressed as Jack.

"I hes been keepin' house, ma'm, fer Mr. Monkton, since he left ther place, an' also diggin' in ther claim fer him."

"Will you continue to reside here?" and Janette could hardly keep from showing her repugnance to the man.

"Not at ther cabing, ma'm, but up ther canyon at the claim, whar I hes a pard who is also workin' fer yer husban', ma'm."

"Ah!" and this exclamation expressed relief that Jack was not to be an inmate of the family.

The interior as well as the exterior of her home showed that there had been preparations made to receive her and she could but think it was kind of Paul to do all he could for her comfort and happiness in her desolate home.

"Mrs. Monkton, I will have to leave you now," said Captain Kit, coming forward.

"Indeed! then you will not await to see Mr. Monkton?"

"I am sorry I cannot; but I will see him at another time."

"I am very sorry to hear you say so, for I was in hopes that you would meet him no more. In fact, I may as well frankly say that I will never tolerate as a visitor Captain Hyena, the Red Angel Chief of the Overland."

"You are certainly the judge, madam, of the guests you desire to receive; but there is a financial matter between your husband and myself that must be settled."

"Indeed! Can he have business transactions with an outlaw?"

"He has."

"He owes you, then?"

"He does."

"I have a certain sum with me, so may I ask the amount of his indebtedness to you?"

"It is a large sum."

"Name it."

"I will explain. We were friends in the past, and I owe him deep gratitude; but I fell in love with you and intended to run off with you."

"Villain!" hissed Janette.

"I do not deny the name, madam."

"Proceed with your story, sir."

"Then it was he who told me of his love for you, and marriage to you as a girl, and I gave up my claim upon you for a consideration."

"And what was that consideration?"

"I told him that I wanted a certain claim, and I must have you or that."

"And he pledged the claim?"

"He told me that he would give it to me if it was his, but that the property I wanted belonged to your father, and was, consequently, yours now. I then took you, kidnapped you, as you know, and your ransom price from him was to be that claim."

"And he promised that which was not his?"

"Oh, no; but I promised to deliver you in safety here, at his cabin, and he agreed, in some way, to give me an equivalent in money for the claim."

"If he cannot?"

"Then both you and your husband are in my power, madam, and it must be yourself or the claim!"

"As we are in your power, you are not afraid of losing your ransom price, so I will talk with Mr. Monkton when he comes and let you know. Where will you be?"

"I leave my negro here to cook for you—"

"To guard us, you mean?"

"As you please, madam; he will communicate with me, for I shall be camped near enough to this spot to be readily informed."

"And you will pledge yourself to release all claim to other ransom, and no longer molest my husband and myself, or come near us, if we give up this property you demand?"

"I do."

"Will you put that in writing?"

"What need?"

"I wish it."

"To please you, yes."

"I saw pen, ink and paper in the cabin. I will get them and you write your release."

"In consideration for the claim, when I receive the title from you?"

"Yes."

He drew off his gauntlet glove, sat on the doorstep, and with his left hand wrote as Janette dictated.

"Sign your own name, sir," ordered, rather than said, Janette.

"That name is buried in the grave of the past; but I will sign the name by which you know me, and under which I will persecute you if the terms I demand are not fulfilled."

And he wrote in the same bold hand:

"Kit, the Red Angel, Captain of the Overland Road-Agents."

Janette took the paper quietly, and threw it indifferently upon the table indoors, while she said:

"Now, sir, you can depart, and you will hear from Mr. Monkton and myself to-morrow."

He bowed, turned away, and mounting his horse rode across the bridge, followed by his two comrades, Bonanza Bill and Denver Dave.

Jack let fall the bridge for them, and then asked of Janette:

"Want me any more, lady?"

"No; but at what hour will Mr. Monkton be at home?"

"By dark anyhow, ma'm."

"Very well; you can go, for he knows where to find you if he needs you."

"Yes, ma'm, just up ther canyon, an' I wishes yer happiness, ma'm, in yer miner's home."

With this Jack also went his way, and Brick, the negro, raised the spans of the bridge after him, while Janette returned into the cabin and idly picked up the paper left by Captain Kit and began to glance over it with seeming interest.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOPE AND DESPAIR FOR MORE HEARTS THAN ONE.

THE shadows of night began to fall in the canyon while yet the sunlight illumined the skies.

The hoot of the owl was heard from its retreat in the forests, and the howl of the wolf rose dimly as he left his lair in the crevices of the rocks, the waters rushing against the rocks seemed to lose their musical ripple at nightfall and change into a somber dirge, while a whippoorwill perched itself upon the ground just in front of the cabin, and within a few yards of Janette, and began to send forth its mournful notes.

Out under the shelter sat Brick, the Black Bravo, his supper all ready, awaiting the return of the tardy bridegroom, and the flames flashing up made him seem like some huge ogre in the eyes of the waiting bride.

Had silence intense rested upon the spot, it would have been intolerable, and yet the sounds that broke the stillness seemed unbearable to the lonely girl.

The howling of wild beasts had become familiar sounds to her ears, as had also the songs of nightbirds; but there in that drear, wild region they seemed more dismal than ever before.

Why had Paul Monkton not come? Had harm befallen him on the mountains? Had he been shot down by some foe?

These questions flitted through her mind constantly, and then came one.

What would become of her if aught had happened to the one for whom she waited?

With the remembrance of the words of Captain Kit, that he loved her, and intended to have kidnapped her, she felt the horror of being in his power.

As the feeling increased in her heart, she murmured:

"I will wait until to-morrow, and then if he does not come I will leave this spot, yes, if I have to kill that black devil yonder, and back to Frank Powell will I go."

"If Paul is dead, then Frank Powell is my husband, and to him will I go and confess all, for I fear that outlaw did not send my letter."

"I can follow the trail back, for I watched it well on my way here, and my horse and the negro's, now in the stable, are the freshest of the lot, and by taking both, riding one and then the other, and carrying the provisions that I see the cabin is well stored with, I can reach the fort."

"Oh! what have I not been forced to suffer? And will my sorrows ever end?"

She buried her face in her hands as she sat on the doorstep with the night shadows creeping around her, and appeared the very picture of despair.

"Massa Monkton comin', missy."

She sprung to her feet at the words of the black, and just then a cheery halloo echoed down the canyon.

In her loneliness, and in her sudden joy, she answered it with a clear, ringing call that silenced the night-birds' songs and the yelping barks of the wolves.

"Bravo! that voice I know among a thousand! Welcome, Janie, to your home in the hills, your miner-husband's wigwam," came in the clear tones of Paul Monkton, and Janette bounded down to the bridge to meet him.

Brick was already there and quickly lowered it, and then the two went across the island, and the second span was let down.

As it touched, the man sprung upon one end, and Janette gliding forward met him in the center.

"Oh, Paul, I would have died here had you not come!" she cried, as she threw herself into his arms.

"I am here, my beautiful bride," he said, softly.

Who can blame her, girl that she was? The man she there clung to she had known since her tenth year. He had been a dweller in her own happy home as an adopted brother. Reverses had parted them, and she had met in that far-away land, Frank Powell, and had loved him.

Who can blame her for loving the handsome, noble man who had saved her life more than once, and had been ever to her as kind, as gentle, as loving as a woman.

She had again met Paul Monkton, but she was then the wife of the Surgeon Scout.

She had married the brave doctor to be parted at once from him, and then found that she was the wife of Paul Monkton, although she had married him "in fun" when just in her teens.

She would not sin against the one, and determined to be true to the other.

Monkton had been her first love, and, bound to him by ties, she clung to him in spite of the shadow that fell upon him from being the friend of an outlaw.

With pain at the sorrow that must fall upon poor Powell, her heart bounded with joy at the thought that Paul Monkton was all in all to her then and there.

There were things she could not understand about him. She had been fretted by his staying away from her, and having Captain Hyena to act for him, but the words of Captain Hyena had explained this, when he told her that he held her as security for a debt to be paid.

That debt she was determined should be paid that night, and then they would be forever free from the outlaw chief and his hateful presence.

Thus it was she met and welcomed with a full heart the husband who came to her there in that drear place, and hoped for a life of happiness even amid those shadows.

But let me leave Janette hoping for the best, and again return to Frank Powell and Devil Jim, whom the reader will remember we left by the wayside, the former playing the part of Good Samaritan to his one-armed ally.

Through the long hours of the night the surgeon watched by the side of the wounded man, giving him his medicine regularly, and anxiously watching its effect.

By degrees the rambling talk of the man changed, and he began to speak of his home in boyhood.

Powell said nothing, and Devil Jim went on, no longer using the dialect and slang of the prairies, and which has really become a border language of its own, but speaking in a natural tone, and as one who had known better days than his appearance and words would indicate.

"Lucy, did you say? Yes, I remember little Lucy, and how I used to haul her up the old school-house hill in my sled, and then what jolly rides we had down it together."

"Does she know Devil Jim, you ask? And Dead Knife Jim? And ther Red Angels?"

"Oh, no! Lucy does not know such men, for

they are wild, wicked men who live on the border and kill people for their gold.

"Lucy was beautiful and pure, and promised me she would one day be my wife; but I was a wild fellow, and grew up awkward and ugly, and those that could not see my heart told her I was bad clean through.

"She did not believe them, but her parents did, and so she married another.

"I never blamed her, but I did blame him, for he was treacherous to me. He said he was my friend, and yet urged Lucy to cast me off. He was rich, and she became his wife. Are they happy, you ask? I hope she is, for he is dead. You ask how he died? I'll tell you: you see, I took to drink, like a fool, when Lucy married him, and then I went down hill faster than ever I had gone in my sled, you know. One day I was drunk, and there were others there. Lucy's husband was there, too. Liquor, I blame it on; but I became frenzied and acted the part of a demon.

"He, Lucy's husband, you know, I killed that night.

"That is what made me fly to the West, for I am a hunted man."

Thus, talking to an imaginary person, whom he believed to be asking him questions about the past, Devil Jim ran on, sometimes losing his own identity in his delirium, and again believing that he was once more a child.

Powell listened to his ravings, and several times he muttered:

"Poor man! he too has his sorrows with the rest of us, wild and reckless as he has seemed. He too carries a skeleton in his heart, and the rattling of the bones never allows his conscience to sleep."

After midnight Devil Jim sunk into a gentle sleep, but punctually at the hour for his medicine his devoted nurse forced it between his lips, and the result began to show itself with good effect.

With the blankets which the outlaw had taken from the cabin in the mountain, the surgeon shut in a comfortable space, that kept the chill night air out.

The wound, too, was dressed often, so as to draw out the inflammation and fever, and as dawn broke Frank Powell looked into the upturned face of the man before him and said:

"He is doing splendidly, and looks far better than when I found him here. He will soon rally."

Seeing that his patient slept soundly, the surgeon watered the horses, staked them out on a fresh feeding-place, and then cooked some breakfast for himself, after which he lay down to take a nap, which he sadly needed.

He was so worn out that he slept soundly, and awoke with a start at the words:

"Pards, you is my plunder!"

Resistance was useless, for two men stood over him, and their rifles covered his heart and that of Devil Jim.

CHAPTER XV. CAUGHT NAPPING.

WHEN the strange voice fell upon the ears of Frank Powell and Devil Jim, the latter did not move, but seemed to be sleeping soundly.

Powell glanced up with an unmoved manner, and took in the situation at once.

"Well, my men, you have certainly caught me napping," said the Surgeon Scout, with the utmost coolness of manner.

As he spoke he gazed into the faces of the two men, and one look was enough to condemn them.

They might be miners from some of the distant camps; but if they were, they were of the very worst class among them.

They were stamped villains in every lineament of their faces.

They were roughly clad, uncouth in appearance, and were armed for action.

A short distance off their horses were hitched to a tree, and they had come on foot to the shelter that protected the surgeon and his One-Arm Pard.

Under other circumstances Frank Powell would never have been surprised.

But he had lost his rest for over a week, had pushed on untiringly on the trail, and had not closed his eyes through the night, so that he sunk into an almost prostrated slumber.

Once his eyes were open he was fully awake to the situation.

But, as I have said, he took it with a *sang froid* manner that nearly threw his captors off their guard.

"Yas, we caught yer nappin', but we waked yer up to ther fun o' the situation," said one.

"The fun is on your side, I think."

"We knows it is, an' arter a while we intends ter laff; but we won't now, fer we is a leetle afeerd you might take advantage o' our 'musement."

"Oh, no, I am harmless."

"You gives ther lie to your looks then."

"Looks are often deceitful, you know," said Powell, with a smile.

"Yas, in a woman they allus is, as I knows, fer I hes been married; but why don't yer pard wake up?"

"He is sick."

"He looks dead."

"No, he has been wounded and is asleep, and my watching by him all night is why I slept so soundly that you crept upon me."

"Yas, I see; but what is there in that leetle box?"

"Medicines."

"And them?"

"Surgical instruments."

"Surg—what?"

"Knives and saws for cutting off limbs of human beings."

"I see; but you must be a doctor."

"I am."

"What is your handle— No, now, don't raise them arms, for we hes got yer covered."

"So I see."

"Now, tell us your name?"

"Frank Powell."

"Whar from?"

"The Platte."

"You wears a uniform."

"Yes."

"In ther army?"

"I am."

"Yer hain't a paymaster, playin' doctor?"

"No."

"Has yer ever heerd o' a white man named White Beaver?"

"Yes."

"They calls him ther Magic Doctor here in Colorady, whar he ust ter live in ther mines."

"Yes."

"But he went up ter Nebrasky, an' thar they calls him ther Wizard Doctor an' ther Surgeon Scout."

"Yes."

"Does you know him?"

"Slightly."

"Whar is he?"

"I am the man."

The men gave a slight start, and then the one who had been spokesman cried:

"I almost guessed it!"

"Tom, keep yer weepin on him fer kill, as he are a terror ef he gits ther jump on us."

"Now, you know who I am, what do you intend to do with me?" coolly asked the surgeon.

"What is you doing here?"

"I was on my way to the mines, and came across this poor fellow lying here wounded, so I stopped to do what I could for him."

"Oh! you wasn't together, then?"

"No."

"Does you know him?"

"Yes; I have seen him before."

"Who is he?"

"Doubtless you have heard of him before, for he belongs to a band on the Overland known as the Red Angels."

"You bet! Cap'n Kit's gang?"

"The same."

"We has heerd they was makin' a fortin' in gold."

"They have been getting more lead of late than gold."

"Are that so?"

"It is."

"Who are thet Angel?"

"He is known as Dead Knife Jim and Devil Jim."

"Waal! waal! he are ther great knife-thrower?"

"Yes."

"I heerd how he lost his arm."

"Yes, his right arm is gone."

"And you found him here?"

"Yes."

"Waal, you talk straight as the crow flies, and I guesses you is ther squar' man they say you is; but ther fact be thet we is on ther plunder game, an' while we was away from our leetle home last night, somebody sailed in thar fer keeps, kilt ther two gents we hed playin' housekeeper, an' pranced off with a large fortin."

"Ther cap'n were black in ther face as a nigger about it, then he got white, an' sent ther boys off in pairs to look up ther robber an' murderer."

"We two found tracks leadin' here, an' come upon you."

"Thar stan's two o' our hosses, we knows, an' thar is ther hoof-tracks comin' here, with a leetle spot o' blood now an' then on ther trail."

"Thet one-armed pilgrim are wounded yer say, an' I guesses he are ther man we wants."

"You cannot move him, for it will kill him."

"Oh, you wants ter git him well so as you kin see him hang."

"He doubtless deserves hanging; but I would not hold him prisoner, when I found him as I did."

"Oh, you is squar' clean through; but we'll compromise with him, fer ef he gives up ther dust he tuk, an' j'ines our band, we'll say it's quits, fer we wants a good man like him in ther gang, an' kin fergive ther stealin' he did, as we steals ourselves."

"The man is not able to speak."

"He has a fever, and has been delirious all night."

"Waal, we'll jist s'arch an' see whar ther dust is he got."

"It is not about him, or I would have seen it."

"Perhaps it is with his saddle yonder."

"It may be; but you get up and go with us, fer we loves you too much ter lose yer."

Frank Powell knew that he had desperate men to deal with.

He was no fool, to throw away his life, and his belt of arms hung on the limbs of the tree above his head.

If he attempted to rise and seize them, he would die, he well knew.

One of the men stepping forward seized his belt and rifle that hung on the limb, and the other, with his rifle almost pressing against him, said:

"Now go with us an' we'll s'arch ther saddle-fixin's."

Without a word the Surgeon Scout arose and walked toward where the saddle and traps had been thrown down by Devil Jim.

But hardly had he taken half a dozen steps when two shots, in rapid succession, were heard, and the two self-confessed outlaws fell in a heap on either side of him.

CHAPTER XVI.

TAKING UP THE TRAIL AGAIN.

HAD the two men, so suddenly shot down while guarding Frank Powell, lived to have known who was their slayer, they could not have been more surprised than was the Surgeon Scout at the discovery.

Wheeling about quickly, his eyes first sought the thickets, and then fell upon a little puff of smoke gently rising from the spot where lay Devil Jim.

"Jim, did you fire those shots?" he cried, excited beyond his usual manner, as he sprung to his side.

"Yas, Doc."

"Why, I thought you were asleep and very sick, when lo! you dropped those fellows in magnificent style," and he laid his fingers upon the pulse of the wounded man, while he gently took the revolver from his hand.

"Yas, I nailed 'em fu'st class, so I guesses you is bringing me round all right."

"I has been wandering, Doc, but I know'd you'd come, an' I guess I know'd you was here."

"Yer see I woked up to hear voices, an' I seen thet you was in a hole, so I jist said nothin' an' laid lo'."

"When them fellers moved off with yer, I concluded to show I wasn't dead yit, so I fooled round fer my pistol, an' jist sent ther bullets whar I wanted 'em."

"Jim, you are a noble fellow, if you only knew it, and those fellows meant mischief toward us, and it is just as well that you shot them."

"Now let me see about you."

"Your pulse is good, your fever broken, and you are doing far better than I expected."

"I will get you something to eat and keep you quiet for a day or so, and you will be yourself again."

"I feels all right now, Doc, but a leetle weaky."

"You are weak, and you just escaped a long and hard siege of it, Jim."

"Now I'll put those bodies under ground, and—"

"Jis' s'arch the'r clothin' fer me, Doc."

"No, Jim, I do not do that kind of work."

"I will bury them and then look after their horses."

"Yas, we has horses ter sell now, Doc."

"Keep quiet, Jim, and try and go to sleep, and it will refresh you."

The Surgeon Scout then left Devil Jim, and went about the duties devolving upon him.

The bodies of the outlaws were buried, their horses staked out with the others, and then a good meal was cooked, of which the wounded man partook with a relish.

Thus the day passed away, the surgeon sleeping during the afternoon to be able to watch by night.

The following morning Devil Jim expressed himself as feeling perfectly well, and expecting that they might have a visit from the other outlaws, Frank Powell decided to seek a safer and more desirable camp.

The move was made to a pleasant camping-ground in a locality where nothing but to search for them, would be likely to bring any one there.

Jim bore the ride well, and the Surgeon Scout felt that they must rest a day or two longer before they could once more go on the long trail.

"Well, Jim, you were hot on the heels of Captain Kit when you got hurt," he said, as the outlaw lay that night with his feet to the cheerful camp-fire and he sat near him.

"Yer hes seen, Doc, what I got up at ther cabin?"

"It were that thet got me my wound; but I was s'archin' fer ther light I seen from up ther valley, and arter my scrimmage I hed ter take ther back trail."

"And yet you could not have been very far from Captain Kit when night came on?"

"No, sir, I were not more than a couple o' hours' ride, at furthest."

"But this puts me back two days or so."

"Well, Jim, I am confident that he is not very far from here, for he will halt in the mines somewhere."

"Oh, I kin find him, an' I'll light out in ther mornin'."

"But will you feel able?"

"I wasn't able to go ter-day, Doc, but I'm all right now, and don't you forgit it, and I owes it to you, fer I'd 'a' died right thar, ef you hedn't come along."

"You is a hoss, an' a tearin' fine doctor, you bet."

"Well, Jim, if you do go on, I'll leave the horses here, and follow until I get a sign from you that Captain Kit is not far away."

"Then I'll return here and await your coming, for, as I told you, I feel sure that he is not very many miles from here, as the first mines are not over three hours' ride distant."

"This are certainly a safe place, Doc, an' you covered up our trail mighty fine when we left ther valley, so I doesn't think it can be found, unless by accident."

"So I'll come right here ter jine yer as soon as I finds out how matters is at ther cap'n's camp, and what are ther prospects fer our doin' a leetle work fer ther young leddy."

Thus it was arranged, and after a good night's rest Devil Jim arose and expressed himself as fully restored to health, his wound being only a little one.

The Surgeon Scout rode off with him, covering up their tracks when they struck the valley trail, and an hour after they were at the camp where Captain Hyena had spent the night before he reached the cabin.

From there it was plain trailing, and it could be seen that others had followed on the track of the party.

"Doubtless the desperadoes in these hills have followed them, expecting to find a party from whom they will get booty."

"They'll git lead an' steel ef they tackles Cap'n Kit, Doc."

"Oh, yes, he's a game fellow; but I hope to have his life on my hands, Jim, so trust no one else will harm him."

"Now I will let you go on ahead, and will follow until you leave a sign that you have made some discovery of importance."

Devil Jim now started on the trail alone, and after waiting an hour, Frank Powell followed.

For several miles he went along and then he came to some marks in the trail.

There was one like an arrow pointing to the left, and behind it was the figure 4.

"That reads about four miles in that direction Captain Hyena has halted," muttered the Doctor.

Around the point of the arrow was drawn a circle, and this the Surgeon Scout read at once, for he said:

"That means that the trail has ended, and the Hyena is in his lair."

"Now I will return and wait for Dead Knife Jim's report, when I shall act."

So saying Frank Powell rode slowly back on the trail toward where he had left the horses.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUEL ON HORSEBACK.

SURGEON POWELL rode slowly back along the trail he had come.

His thoughts were busy with plotting to rescue Janette, rather than in thinking of his own danger.

He disliked to go back on the trail, although he knew if he went on he might miss all chances of success.

This going back, however, seemed like an ill-omen to him.

But he must leave all to Devil Jim, and he now felt that he could trust his one-armed ally as he could himself.

In fact, Frank Powell had formed a strong friendship for the man, villain though he was.

That night of watching by his side, and listening to his ravings and incoherent talk, had awakened a feeling of sympathy in his heart for the man who had become an outcast from all who had known him in bygone years.

When Devil Jim discovered the abiding-place of Captain Kit, its strength, its force in men, and the possibilities and obstacles in the way of Janette's rescue, then Frank Powell intended to act.

He had come to rescue the young girl, and to punish her abductor.

He knew the difficulties and the dangers, but he did not shrink from them, but rather courted them.

Lost in deep reverie he rode on the back trail which led alongside of a cliff at that point.

Under most circumstances he was on the watch, and never would have ridden around a sharp rocky point without first reconnoitering to see what was beyond.

Now he hardly saw the trail as he went along, and his horse gave him warning of danger by a loud snort.

Instantly, with the rapidity of action for which he is famous, he had drawn his revolver and leveled it, while he brought his horse to a halt.

Before him, some fifteen paces distant, was a horseman, who had been coming his way.

But he too had halted, and he too had drawn a revolver and covered the Surgeon Scout.

Thus the two sat upon their horses facing each other and motionless as the stone beside them.

The stranger was well mounted and he was armed.

He was a man of forty, perhaps, with a long black beard, fine form, and a handsome face.

His eyes were black and expressive, but sinister, and the face looked treacherous.

His dress was that of a mining sport, rather than a miner, for he wore a velvet coat, black pants and a white shirt, while his head was covered by a gray slouch hat, and kid gloves were upon his hands.

"Well, sir, is it war between us?" asked Frank Powell, calmly, as he eyed the man in front of him.

"Do you want war?" was the evasive reply in an indifferent tone.

"No, for I care not to take human life unless it is necessary."

"You are fastidious," and the other sneered.

"Oh, no, I am simply no murderer at heart."

"I am going my way, and you can go yours."

"I have a way peculiarly my own here."

"Indeed!"

"I have."

"Then take it."

"I intend to, for you look like one who might afford good picking."

"Ah! I get at your meaning now."

"You mean that you are one of the Gold Buzzards that haunt these hills."

"I am the head and front of the Gold Buzzards, as men call us because we pick flesh for gold instead of bones for flesh."

"I am really glad to have met you, sir, and would suggest that you lose no time in picking what gold you can from me."

"Well, sir, my motto is to pick a live man if I can, a dead one if I must."

"Don't let anything I could say stand in the way of taking your choice with me," sneered Frank Powell.

"I will not, for as you have the look of one who can be dangerous, I will—"

He paused, and the two men glared at each other, each with his revolver leveled and hand as steady as a stone.

"What?" asked the Surgeon Scout, as the other did not complete his sentence.

"Kill you!"

With the words the Gold Buzzard touched his trigger.

But Frank Powell's eye was on that very finger, and his revolver discharged its bullet instantaneously with the other.

The Surgeon Scout clapped his hand quickly to his side and reeled in his saddle, while the Gold Buzzard dropped to the ground without a moan, and lay in a heap by the side of his horse, which did not move from his tracks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOLD BUZZARD'S CHARM.

"THE closest call of my life! That man was a dead shot and as cool as an icicle," said Frank Powell, as he dismounted and thrust his hand into his breast-pocket.

From thence, just over the heart, he took out a little velvet case, in which was a miniature set in solid gold.

The miniature was shattered to fragments, the face being outward, but in the gold back was imbedded the leaden bullet of his foe.

It had cut its way through the uniform coat and velvet case, shivered the likeness, and indented the gold, striking with such force as to severely bruise the flesh and cause a severe shock.

"Ah me! is this an omen that Janette is forever lost to me?"

"See, her likeness is shivered to fragments, and the gold that incased it has saved my life."

Carefully he wrapped the pieces in his handkerchief and returned them to his pocket.

Then he stepped to the fallen man, lying in a heap and motionless, and bent over him.

"Strange, that he, too, should have had so close a call, for he not only lives, but is merely stunned, for my bullet glanced on the frontal bone."

"We two were not meant to kill each other, and I will be superstitious enough to bring this man round all right and let him go on his way."

"My God! was the star of my destiny a crimson one?"

So saying he took the man up in his arms, bore him to a mossy bank near, and laying him upon it, began to restore him to consciousness.

The wound in the forehead was washed, with water from his canteen, the ragged edges drawn together and then dressed.

Then the man opened his eyes.

There was no recognition in them at first, and they had a glassy stare; but after a moment he seemed to recall what had happened and said:

"I thought you were dead."

"So I thought of you, until I discovered my mistake, and that my bullet glanced upward,

making an ugly wound, but doing you little harm."

The man put his hand to his head, felt it an instant, and said:

"You have dressed it for me, and as skillfully as a surgeon could have done."

"I am a surgeon."

"No! Are you stationed near here?"

"No, up in Nebraska on the Platte, where I am surgeon at the post."

"Ah! I have heard of you, for you are Powell, the Wizard Doctor."

"So some call me."

"I heard of your going to the Sioux village, and curing them, when there was an epidemic of small-pox there, and, in fact, of a hundred of your deeds."

"I am glad to meet you, Surgeon Powell, and offer my thanks for not killing me, and then so kindly dressing my wound."

"I meant to kill you."

"As I did you; but what in the name of the Rockies became of my bullet, for I never miss my aim!"

Frank Powell coolly took out the handkerchief and its contents and said:

"Here is your bullet, which I shall keep as a souvenir* of the Gold Buzzard of Colorado."

"Ah! I see; you, too, had a close visit from Death."

"I did."

"I see that you have thoughtfully removed my arms and retain your own."

"Am I to consider myself your prisoner?"

"Oh, no; you can go your way, and I will go mine."

"But there is a price on my head, which you could get by delivering me up in Denver to the authorities."

"I do not seek to earn blood-money," haughtily said Frank Powell.

"There we differ, for I take all the gold I can get."

"Robbing is your trade."

"True; but call it a profession, for *trade* sounds so common; but am I to understand that I am free to go?"

"Yes."

"Weapons and all?"

"Certainly; here are your arms."

"You do not fear me then?"

"Not in the least, for we are man against man, and I'll take those chances whenever they arise."

"You are a strange man."

"I am an unhappy one," broke involuntarily from Powell's lips.

"Indeed, you look it; but the cause of your unhappiness I will not ask, nor will I, what it is that brings you here, though it is my duty to inquire into the business of those who travel these hills and valleys."

"I like you, for you are every inch the man, and to prove my appreciation of what you have done for me, take this."

"See; it is a charm; hang it upon your watch-chain, which I would have robbed you of, if you had allowed me to do so."

"I take it from my chain, you see, and it is a finer specimen than the men wear, for, see, this bird's beak is red, those are rubies, and the eyes are diamonds."

"It is a gold representation of a buzzard," said Frank Powell, admiring the handsome charm.

"Yes; with wings spread, looking for prey; but you nearly clipped this buzzard's wings, awhile since."

"Now, wear that, and whenever you see a stranger in these parts who has the look of being a Gold Buzzard, just stretch your arms right out from your body, and he will understand the signal, while, if you show him that charm he will respect it, for I will let it be known in the band that I have made you an honorary member."

"Good-by, Doctor Powell, and success to you."

The strange man buckled on his belt of arms, put on his hat, raised it politely, mounted his horse and rode off, leaving Frank Powell with the charm in his hand, gazing after him.

"Strange that such men as I have met on this border, should be cut-throats," he muttered, as he too rode away from the spot which had so nearly proven fatal to him.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN KIT AND HIS PARDS.

WHEN Captain Kit rode away from the miner's cabin, where he had left Janette, he directed his way up the canyon.

After going little over half a mile, he came in sight of a small hut perched up on the mountain-side.

A man sat in front of it, apparently, from his attitude, expecting company.

Up the steep trail the outlaw chief rode, and the man arose to greet him as he came to a halt.

"Well, Moseley, I am back again, you see?" said Captain Kit, addressing the man, who

*I was shown this *souvenir*, which is kept by Doctor Powell in a small case with the fragments of the miniature.—THE AUTHOR.

showed in his face traces of gentility; but which dissipation and a wild life had marked.

"So I see, captain; but will you stay long?" answered the man.

"No, I have come for a little while only; but I hope you have completed the cabin I asked you to build."

"I have, sir; for Jack and I worked hard at it, and it is in the very spot you picked out, and makes a famous place to live in, and to get out of, if you have to depart in a hurry."

"I will go up there with you now, and my men here, Bonanza Bill and Denver Dave will bunk in with you in your hut."

The man stepped into the hut, picked up a big bundle, and followed the chief further up the mountain-side.

At length they came to a little shelf of rock, jutting out from a lofty cliff, and upon this was built a small ten by twelve cabin.

The logs were heavy and joined closely together, the roof equally as strong, and the door of massive timbers.

Within were a couple of bunks, one above the other, at one end of the cabin, a table, a chair and a fireplace.

The chimney was on the side against the cliff, and large and roomy.

"This is a snug box, Moseley, you have built, and I will be comfortable here; but how does the chimney work?"

"All right, captain," and the man stepped upon the rough projections and ascended to the height of six feet, when he called down:

"I am on a level with the tunnel, or cave, now, sir."

"All right, you have done well, Moseley; but now tell me about the mine?"

"Well, sir, Jack and I have watched it closely, and have had to drive off several parties."

"Have you worked it?"

"A little at night, sir; but we had to be very careful, for there are those who know it does not belong to us, and we have been watched, too."

"Well, we will work it openly in future."

"Have you bought it, captain?"

"I have about done so; but does my old claim pay any?"

"We've got a little paying dirt out of it, but only enough for a few games of poker and drinks all around when we have gone down to Celestial City."

"Your face looks as if you have gone there quite often, Moseley."

"No, sir; I keep the coloring material in the cabin."

"You have an expensive face, Moseley."

"Yes, Captain Kit, it cost me a fortune to color it, and it takes all you pay me, and the scraps I get out of your old claim, to keep the rosy look on it now."

"In olden times I drank port, now bad liquor, and there is the difference; but you said Jack and I were to have the lower cabin ready for a lady?"

"Yes; she came with me, and she is the owner of the claim up the canyon; but her husband is to take full charge, and you, Jack and the two men I brought with me are to be the workmen."

"Then it is to be worked openly?"

"Oh, yes; for they have the papers to prove their share, and I am half-owner."

"It will pan out big, Moseley."

"There is no doubt of that, captain, for there is plenty of metal there, if your claim is a poor one on this side of the canyon."

"But will this gentleman be the overseer?"

"Yes; and live at the cabin with his wife and my negro, Brick."

"I hope there are no frills about him, because you are the only master I ever had that I could get along with."

"Why, do you know I had a wife once, and she tried to boss me about my drinking, and I killed her."

"That is what sent me out here, you know."

"I always knew you were a devil, Moseley, but you'll get along with my pardner; still he is not one to stand nonsense."

"And remember, his wife knows nothing of our partnership, and thinks I have gone for good."

"And do you leave us, captain?"

"Yes; for I have work elsewhere."

"Now return to your cabin, and if I need you I will come there; but I need rest now."

"Yes, sir; but when does this gentleman come?"

"He is on his way here now, and may arrive to-night."

"If so, I will depart at once."

"His name is Monkton—Paul Monkton; he is not new to the frontier, and knows where to find you, or will send Brick after you."

"Yes, sir," and with this the man departed from the cabin, while Captain Kit stood where he had left him, lost in thought, for he gazed listlessly over the valley and at the mountains beyond.

"They shall not know yet, for it will be time enough to tell them if I have to, and when I see how matters work down yonder at the cabin."

"This is a desperately bold game I am play-

ing; the gamest of my life; but I shall win; I know it!

"Ah! I left my horse at the lower cabin."

"I must go after him."

He descended the trail to the cabin where Moseley dwelt, and found that Jack had arrived, and with his comrade and the two men he had brought with him were becoming quite sociable over a bottle the gentleman who had called his an expensive face had produced.

"Have a drink, captain?"

"No, thank you, Moseley, and I believe you are drunk half the time."

"Half-drunk all the time, captain; it is the best way to be, for if I am sober my conscience pricks me all the time and I am cross."

"If I am half-drunk I wag the world, instead of letting it wag me."

The chief laughed, for he had found the man faithful in spite of his dissipation, and motioning to Jack, walked off, leading his horse.

"Jack, you know my little plot?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"You have not given it away?"

"No, sir."

"Not even to Moseley?"

"No, cap'n."

"Well, I will pay you well for your silence, and I need your aid further."

"I'm on hand, cap'n."

"Come up to the cabin in about an hour, and get Moseley, Bill and Dave dead-drunk if you can."

"It will be easy for ther last two, cap'n, but Mose holds more lickier than any dimmyjack I ever seen."

"Try it on, anyway."

"I'll do it, and they'll like the fun."

"But you keep sober."

"Yas, cap'n."

The chief now walked on up the mountain to the newly-built cabin, staked his horse out on a slope where there was grass, and entered the little abode, closing the door behind him.

An hour passed, and soon after Jack came toiling up the hill.

He had been drinking, but was not drunk, though he showed that he was by no means sober.

He tried to enter the cabin, but finding the door locked, knocked.

"Is that you, Jack?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"Now come in," and the heavy door swung open.

Jack stepped in, but started back with a cry, when he was suddenly seized by strong arms and dragged bodily into the cabin.

CHAPTER XX.

FOILED BY HIS OWN BAND.

INTO the cabin together went Janette and Paul Monkton, after she had met him at the bridge, and as he glanced around the room he said tenderly:

"Not like the old home, Janie, nor as good as my uncle's ranch, but it is the best I could do for you in this wild land, and we will be so happy the short time we remain, for I have an idea that we will not stay long."

"I need no excuse, Paul; and I feel that you have done all that you could; but I do wish that we could have been married under different circumstances."

"You refer to that marriage so long ago, Janie?"

"I refer to the fact that I married, as I believed, one man, and found myself the wife of another."

"I was torn from him, Paul, and oh! how his great brave heart has bled, I know; but could it have been that you had reminded me of our old love, even though I was a child, told me that the marriage in fun, as I thought, was in earnest, and asked me to be yours, I would have consented and all this trouble and sorrow would have been avoided, and you would not owe your bride to the friendship of an outlaw."

"Come, missy, come, massa, de supper am smokin' hot, an' de good t'ings all ready, sah an' missy," said Brick, appearing in the door at that instant.

"Come to our wedding-supper, Janie," said Paul Monkton, gayly, and he led her to the shelter and seated her opposite to him.

The silver service and china of the outlaw chief was still in use, and Janie poured out the coffee with the air of one who felt her newly-made importance, while Monkton helped her bountifully to what Brick had prepared.

And Brick had certainly felt the importance of the fact that he was preparing a wedding supper, for he had excelled himself even.

There was a bountiful supply of game, hot biscuits, potatoes roasted, canned lobster, sardines, crackers, coffee with sugar and condensed milk for it, all stolen from trains, and, if I must also confess it, raw onions.

Just think of it! raw onions for a wedding supper; but then they were a failing with Brick, and he thought every one else liked them, or should do so, and he concluded the feast would not be perfect without this high-flavored delicacy.

Both ate heartily of their wedding supper, eschewing the onions wholly, however, and then

adjourned to the cabin, where Brick lighted a student's lamp, once the property of some poor book-worm, who failing in his aspirations East, had come West with his little all to be robbed and slain by Captain Kit and his band.

In fact, from the silver service and china on the supper-table, to many another article in the cabin, was a story affixed, which, if told, would have turned poor Janette from her bridal home in horror and loathing.

But ignorant of all, she sat down by the table, where the light from the student's lamp fell full upon her beautiful face, and said:

"Sit there, Paul, and let us have a long talk together, for there is much that I wish to understand which you can tell me."

She thought she saw him frown and bite his lips; but when the light fell full upon his face, there was not a wrinkle on his brow, and a smile rested upon his lip.

"Well, Janie, I am willing to answer all questions."

"That is right, Paul, for there should be no secrets held back, the one from the other."

"All should be fair and honest between us."

"So I think, my little girl, so what is there that you wish to know?"

"First tell me, Paul, what is the tie that binds you to that awful wretch?"

"Who?" he asked, innocently.

"The Hyena."

"Oh! Captain Kit."

"I like Doctor Powell's name for him best."

Again there looked like the shadow of a frown; but he said:

"Well, Captain Hyena; what of him, Janie?"

"I asked to know, Paul, the tie that binds you to him?"

"Simply, I saved his life, and he, knowing about my past, concluded to unite you and I in return."

"Who is he, Paul?"

"I knew him years ago, when he was a gentleman."

"We were at college together."

"What is his name?"

"Captain Hyena."

"No, I mean his real name?"

"On the border?"

"No, when he was a gentleman, if such a thing were ever possible for him to be."

He hesitated before he replied, and then said:

"If you are romantic, Janie, you will not like his name."

"I do not care if it is Smith, for he is nothing to me, and I hope to you, after this night."

"It is Smith—Marmaduke Smith."

"And what did you say was his motive for uniting you and I?"

"Well, he had a friendly motive for one, and a desire to benefit himself for the other."

"Principally the last."

"It may be; but I hope he treated you with every respect?"

"He did, except for one instance."

"And what was that?" asked Paul Monkton, with surprise.

"When he said that he had himself loved me."

"And that was the insult?"

"Certainly, when one so vile as he is could love me."

"I see that you hate the chief most bitterly, Janie."

"Is it a wonder that I hate the murderer of my father, my persecutor, and one like him?" she asked, with intense scorn.

"No, I cannot blame you, but did Captain Kit make known to you that he asked a ransom for you?"

"He did."

"Did he mention it?"

"Yes, it was that poor old mine that my father invested in years ago, to aid a friend pecuniarily."

"Yes, the same of which we were once speaking."

"But do you know where it is?"

"No, other than that it is in Colorado; but I have the papers with me."

"I have a mine near here, and it is now beginning to pan out well, so that I will put a force of four or five men upon it to-morrow."

"I hope the chief's mine is not near us."

"Has he a mine?" asked Janette, quickly.

"I mean the one he seeks to get from you."

"There are the papers, and you can look them over and see."

"If it is, I will be tempted to refuse to give up the claim; but if it is not, then he can have it and welcome."

She got the papers for him, and he glanced over them casually, and said:

"No, it is not near us, Janie, thank Heaven; but what do you wish to do about it?"

"Settle the matter at once."

"Why be in such a hurry?"

"Because I feel under the shadow of his power."

"I told him that I would talk with you, and willingly relinquish my claim to it, and send it by his negro to-night, for he is camped up the valley."

"There will have to be a little quit claim drawn up to send with these papers."

"You, as a business man, can draw that up."

"Yes, and you will sign it as Janette Joslyn, and also as Mrs. Janette Monkton, while I, as your husband now, will also have to put my signature to it."

"Then let us do so at once, for I have the release of the outlaw to all claim upon me, or ransom, in return for this title to the old mine."

"Do you wish to see it?"

"Oh, no; for I'll wager you made it strong if you dictated it," he said, with a laugh.

"I did dictate it, and then put it away for safe-keeping."

"But quick, Paul, let us get rid of the matter, for I wish it ended."

She placed pen, ink and paper before him as she spoke, and then stood behind him as he wrote.

In a bold hand he wrote the quit-claim in favor of "Marmaduke Smith," the light from the student's lamp falling bright upon the paper.

Then he turned to her, and said:

"Here, Janie, read it over and sign it."

Then from his lips came the words:

"Good God!"

She stood like a statue behind his chair, her bosom heaving convulsively—the only sign of life.

Her eyes were set and blazing, her face utterly colorless, and her hands clasped together like a vise.

"In God's name, Janie, are you ill?" he cried.

In a grating voice, as though lips and throat were parched, she said:

"Give me your hand, sir."

He held it out, and she grasped it, at the same time seizing with the other the paper he had just written.

"Janie, speak!" he cried, seemingly bewildered.

"Yes, I will speak!" she said, in the same voice.

"I will say that your writing, that ring, and your hand betray you."

"You are Captain Hyena, the Red Angel, as well as Paul Monkton!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OUTLAW'S CONFESSION.

THE words of Janette, delivered in a voice that was not her own, but hoarse and grating, caused the man to spring back from her, as though an adder had sprung at him.

Then he paused and gazed at her, evidently for once caught off his guard.

He expected to see her faint, or go into hysterics; it would have been a relief to him if she had.

But instead she stood proudly erect, her hands clasped tightly over the paper he had written, and her eyes glaring upon him with an intensity that awed him.

"Janette, why do you speak thus?"

"How dare you thus accuse me?" he cried, at last, as though to brazen it out.

"I dare speak that which I know, sir."

"You wrote me a release this afternoon, and here is its *fac-simile* in writing."

"You wear a ring on your little finger that the Hyena wore, and there is a strange scar across the hand in the shape of a V, which he has."

"I marked well that V on his hand, knowing well it stood for Villain, and I noted how strangely the wound had healed, one side blue, as though the vein had been severed and closed, and the other red."

"The same mark, the same writing with the left hand, as he did, and the exact penmanship, cannot be chance, sir: you are the Hyena of the Overland!"

"Janette!"

"Silence, sir! you are the murderer of my father, the slayer of innocent people, the raider of ranches, and robber of trains and coaches!"

"Oh! what black crimes are yours! and, thank God! I found you out."

"Well, Janette, as you know me, let me no longer disguise the truth, and admit that I am the Overland Outlaw."

"Let me tell you that, after I ruined your father, not by speculation, as you believed, but by *forgery*, for he paid my forged paper to save me from prison, I came East."

"I had no money, and detested work."

"So I took to the road, and learned to love the sport."

"I attacked your train, and you know how anxious I was to capture you."

"Then, loving you as I did, I planned a little scheme to get you."

"I turned ranchero, and sent some of my cowboys to serve Paul Monkton, for they did not know me without my disguise."

"I saw that you loved Surgeon Powell, as he did me, and I determined to make him suffer."

"Thus it was I kidnapped you, through the aid of Kirk Kendrick, who was your father's confidential clerk, and my confederate in the crime against him, and who to-day, believing me dead, does not know me, for when I have been my natural self, I have had him away at the time."

"I love you, Janette, and I wanted you for

my wife, so I laid my plans when I heard Powell and his brother were coming to attack us in the canyon to rescue you, to come here and give up outlawry."

"I determined to work my mine here—nay, I might as well tell you the whole truth, and throw myself upon your mercy."

"The mine that your father bought is rich with dust, and I wished to get it, so that I might work it for our good."

"It is near here, and I have had men watching it for me."

"I told them that Mr. Paul Monkton, who had just brought his wife here, was to have charge, and as my natural self I intended to live here, and forever sink Captain Kit, the outlaw."

"Now, Janette, I have told you all, and I tell you that you are dearer to me than all else in the world!"

"You have heard my confession—you know me as I am, and you are my wife, so forgive all, bury the past, live for the future, and, as soon as we have dug a fortune out of the mine, we will go far from here, seek other scenes in a foreign land, and live in happiness together."

"Happiness?" she gasped.

"Yes, we can be happy."

"You cannot go so far that your black crimes will not haunt you."

"Nay, my crimes trouble me but little."

"I will bury the past to-night, and live for you in the future."

"Silence, sir! fiend incarnate, murderer, assassin, forger, robber, gallows-bird—silence!"

"I scorn you, I loathe you! and this moment, had I the power, I would kill you, for you are too detestable to live!"

"You love me! I hate you with a hatred so intense I could walk bare-footed to the earth's end to see you hang!"

"Begone from me, and never let me see your hated face again!"

He fairly shrunk from her at first.

But recovering his nerve once more, he broke out in a rude laugh, and as she pointed to the door, he said:

"I have heard you, my queen of tragedy—now hear me!"

"You are my prisoner from this moment, and you shall know what it is to be the prisoner, and have the hate of Captain Kit, the Red Angel!"

Then stepping to the door, he called out:

"Ho, Brick!"

"Yas, massa."

"Take that woman in your arms, and follow me."

"Let her scream, for she will scare nothing but the wolves."

"Yes, massa, me come, but me stop her holler, for she done scare me, an' I hain't no coyote wolf."

As the negro stepped toward her, poor Janette, a moment before crying for help, when no help was near, sunk down in a faint, and was raised in the strong arms of the black giant, who followed his master out of the cabin into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXII.

VISITORS IN THE CANYON.

THE quartette in the little cabin on the mountain-side awoke the morning after their debauch with splitting headaches.

They had found the "bug-juice" of Celestial City by no means a liquor to be forgotten or abused.

"Well, pards, 'the hair of the dog is good for the bite,' they say, so here goes for a straightener up," said Moseley, dashing off a drink that soon steadied his nerves, and he went about getting breakfast.

The others were too hardened also to long feel the effects of their debauch, and after an "appetizer" all sat down to eat breakfast.

Before the meal was finished Jack remarked: "Thar comes thet black nigger from ther caving."

"Yas, an' he are a howlin' terror, too," added Bonanza Bill.

Up the mountain trail came Brick, at an untiring gait, and halting near, said:

"Good-morning, gemmens, an' I hes come ter say that the cap'n says as how you is all ter come down to ther canyon cabin, whar you is ter find ther mine boss."

"Whar is ther cap'n, Brickbat?" asked Denver Dave.

"He hab gone back to ther pararers, sah."

"No; you don't mean it?"

"Yas, gemmen; but he hab left de other gemman, what Jack dar knows, as de boss."

"Yas, Mister Monkton an' he are squar' pards; but we doesn't want ter distarb his humor, so let us git fer ther caving," said Jack.

The four men then followed the negro down to the cabin in the canyon.

Paul Monkton, no longer in disguise, stood at the bridge and lowered it, and as they came across saluted Jack, who said:

"Glad to see yer, boss; an' this are Moseley, my pard; this one are Bonanza Bill, an' t'other are Denver Dave."

Paul Monkton shook hands cordially with

each one, and in a way that won their regard, and said:

"Well, men, your chief has seen fit to return to the prairies, and leave me in charge to work the mine."

"I shall live here, and you had better build you a cabin across the canyon yonder, right by the mine, and where you will be near your work, and in call of me."

"Brick, here, will be our cook, and you can come here for your meals, for the walk is a short one."

"Now, come in, and cement our acquaintance with a drink all around."

The men accepted this invitation with alacrity, and went over to review the situation across the canyon, with high commendation of their new "boss."

Paul Monkton himself selected a site for the cabins, the men at once set to work with their axes, and the canyon echoed to the sound of toil.

Upon the third day the cabin was built, and the miners moved in.

Then up rode a party of horsemen, and the leader called out:

"Ho, pards, what is yer doin' here?"

"Goin' ter dig dust," answered Jack.

"Waal, yer knows ther claims in this kentry has owners, an' we is ther Committee ter see thet no diggin' are done onless a man hes ther papers ter show up his rights."

"Ya, thet are so; but does yer see thet cabin over thar?"

"I does."

"Ther owner o' this mine lives thar."

The horsemen rode over to the cabin, the bridge was lowered for them by Brick, and they were invited to dismount by Paul Monkton.

Then the leader told his errand, and Monkton smilingly produced some papers from his pocket and said:

"The claim belonged first to one Asa Parker, and he sold it to Richard Joslyn, who, dying, left it to his daughter."

"That daughter, Janette, is now my wife, and she came here with me; but, alarmed by the wildness of the country, she wished to return, and I sent her away; but here are the papers, as you see, with her signature, giving me control of the mine."

"What will you drink, gentlemen? and as it is dinner-time, dine with me."

Not a word was said against the right of Monkton to the mine.

In fact the "papers" settled the thing conclusively, for they were not even examined, while the "something to drink" clinched the whole affair as genuine.

After being treated most royally by Monkton, the "Right and Title Mine Committee," as they styled themselves, rode back to Celestial City, twenty miles distant, and Paul Monkton was left in full control of his ill-gotten claim.

"Brick, that visiting Committee, I guess, are also Vigilantes," he said to the negro, as the horsemen rode off.

"Dey looks vicious, sah; but you jist fixed 'em with soft-soap talk, an' de drinkin' did de balance, sah; but dar comes somebody more, sah."

Monkton looked up quickly, for he was always on the *qui vive* for a foe, and beheld a horseman coming up the valley at a slow pace.

"Is he all alone, Brick?"

"Yes, sah, but dere is some men dat kin be all alone, an' yit make you think dere is a dozen of 'em."

"True, and Frank Powell, or either of his brothers are such."

"Lordy, boss, I does be 'fraid ob dem Powell pards, fer dey has got more lightnin' in 'em den I ever see in one man afore."

"They are terrors, Brick; but a bullet will stop them some day; but don't you know yonder man?"

"So I does, sah; it are Dead Knife Jim, an' he are anudder man dat are wildcat all ober, ef he hain't got but one arm now."

"Raise the bridge and let him come over; but what brings him here I cannot tell."

"He has followed our trail, that is certain, and if he has done it others can."

"I must be on my guard, for that Wizard Trio are more than a match for my four men, Brick and myself, if they were to surprise us."

"I am really glad that Devil Jim has come, and, as he cannot use a pick or shovel, I will make a scout of him."

The last words had been said musingly, and, as Brick had lowered the bridges, Monkton went down to meet the new-comer, with a hearty:

"Hello, Devil Jim, what brought you here?"

"But I am glad to see you, whatever the cause of your coming."

"Pard, I knows ther nigger, but fer all yer fresh talk o' bein' glad ter see me, I can't place yer, an' yer face ter me are as strange as ther bible."

"Curses! I have done it now."

"I forgot that I did not have my mask on," muttered Monkton, his face flushing with anger at the manner in which he had betrayed himself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEVIL JIM TELLS HIS STORY.

THOUGH Paul Monkton was momentarily taken aback by what he had done in speaking to Devil Jim as he had, as though he were Captain Kit, though he no longer wore his mask of crimson wings, the outlaw quickly recovered himself, and said with a smile:

"My dear fellow, I know you as well as I do Brick there, for who has not heard of Dead Knife Jim?"

"You know I am the pard of Captain Kit, who has gone away for a while, and I am to have full charge of the mine he has here."

"My name is Monkton, Paul Monkton, the ranchero, and you may have heard of me; but I found I could make more money by going pards with Captain Kit, so here I am, and glad to welcome you, for Brick told me who you were as you rode up."

"Do you see?"

"Oh yes, I see, pard; but it did kinder knock me off my pins to find a man know me so well, whom I never seen."

"Now, I knows ther nigger thar, and the rest o' ther boys o' ther band, an' seein' as ther cap'n had ter light out from ther pararer, I jist tuk his trail an' come on, thinkin' he'd want one with him whom he knowed he c'u'd tie ter in a diffikilty."

"Indeed he does know it, for I have heard him speak often of his one-armed pard, Dead Knife Jim, and only the other day he was speaking of you, and said he wanted you here as a scout, while the other boys worked the mine, for you must know the captain has struck it rich."

"But come in, and let us have a drink, and the boys will be over to supper soon, for they eat here with me."

"I'll do ther eatin' when ther time comes, pard, but I doesn't taste a drap, seein' as when I do I jist takes ther war-path and then look out, sinners."

"But maybe ther cap'n wants me back on ther pararer with him?"

"No indeed, fer he has given up outlawry."

"Does yer mean it?"

"I do."

"Why, I'd as soon 'spected ter see a cat shed its skin as ther cap'n ter giv up killin' an' stealin'."

"It did seem ter kinder suit his natur' so."

"Well, you will no longer hear of him on the Overland Trail, and the Red Angels have gone, too, unless some of them are fools enough to keep on the road."

"Thar is fools thet will do jist sich things."

"Yes, and without the captain for a head get hanged for it."

"Thet are so, an' it are well he give it up, or his head might hev got tangled up in a rope with ther rest of us, for them Powell pards was a-comin' hot on our tracks."

"Ah! do you know what they have done?"

"Raised ther devil, thet are all."

"How?"

"I'll tell yer, pard."

"Do, for I am deeply interested, and I would like to know, if you can tell me, about one of the band known as Kirk Kendrick."

"Ther army flyin' courier thet were?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I kin tell yer all I knows, an' yer kin jist sift it fer yerself."

"I were sent arter ther cap'n, who were away; but I didn't ketch onter him, an' so put back fer ther canyon camp."

"But, pard, thar had been music thar, an' no mistake."

"What had happened?"

"Thar had been a earthquake."

"A what?"

"A blizard o' fire."

"I understand you; the soldiers had attacked the camp."

"Thar had been jist three visitors thar."

"Ha! the Powells?"

"Them same."

"Did they dare to attack my camp alone?"

"I dunno whether they attacked your camp, pard, but I does know thet they sailed inter ther canyon camp o' Cap'n Kit rather lively."

"The three men only?" and Monkton bit his lip with vexation at the *lapsus lingue* in calling it his camp.

"Yas, ther Powell pards, ther Wizard Trio, White Beaver, Night Hawk and Broncho Bill."

"No soldiers were with them?"

"Nary a blue-coat, unless it were ther Doctor, an' he wears uniform."

"There were ten men in camp."

"Is thet what ther cap'n told yer he left thar?"

"Yes."

"Waal, when I got thar I seen five, but the'r toes were turned up to ther starlight."

"And the others?"

"Hed lit out."

"Curse the cowards."

"It were onhealthy fer 'em thar, pard."

"And the Powells sacked the camp, I suppose."

"They jist upset it clean, got ther horses, an' was on ther rampage fer outlaw meat worse nor wolves."

"Ha! ha! but Captain Kit had escaped?"

"Yas, he hed got away with ther ledy, ther nigger yonder, and a couple o' ther boys."

"I tried ter find some o' ther band on ther pararer, but c'u'dn't do it, so went back to the canyon, an' found it were lucky fer me I hedn't camped out thar."

"Why?"

"Ther Powell pards hed been thar ag'in."

"Indeed?"

"Deed they hed, an' thar hed been more music."

"How could that be with none of the band there?"

"Waal, ther gent you axed about sailed inter ther canyon with his two pards, an' found it occupied."

"You mean Kirk Kendrick?"

"Yas, pard, an' don't yer know about ther band same as I do?"

"I have heard all spoken of so much, you know."

"Yas."

"But who occupied the canyon when Kendrick went there?"

"A man."

"Only one?"

"He were enough."

"With three against him?"

"Oh! he's ther one to kinder like odds."

"By Heaven, it was Powell."

"Yer hev hit him, fer it were ther Surgeon Scout."

"What was he doing alone?"

"Lookin' fer scalps, I'm guessin'; but he were thar."

"When you arrived?"

"No; I'm thankful ter say not."

"Did you see Kendrick?"

"No, he got away; but one o' his men got shooted an' t'other wounded, an' it were the latter I hed a talk with afore he died."

"And he told you that Frank Powell had been back, and that Kendrick escaped?"

"Yas, pard, an' he sed as how ther Powell pards were carousin' round ther pararers, tryin' ter find Cap'n Kit an' ther gal."

"Well, they'll have a healthy time of it, I think."

"Yas, fer tho' I know'd thet he hed come this way, I hed a hard time follerin' ther trail; but here I is, an' no mistake."

"And I am glad to see you, and will give you the job of hunter and scout."

"I'm yer angl fer thet biz; but I hed better take a scout on ther back trail mighty quick, fer my idee are that them Powell pards may track us, fer they is jist like bloodhounds ef they gits on a scent."

"You are right; but I have four good men in the mine over yonder, that a signal will call here in five minutes, and then I have you and Brick, seven of us in all, and therefore have no fear of the Wizard Three, terrible as I know them to be."

"Waal, thar is nothin' like confidence in one's self; but all ther same, ef yer lend me a fresh horse, an' have ther nigger give me a feed, I'll go back on ther trail, an' see ef thar is anything lookin' suspicious."

"Certainly, and I am glad to see you so willing, while your anxiety makes me feel that I must be on guard, for those Powell brothers are certainly a most dangerous lot to meet."

"Sartin sure," answered Devil Jim, and, after a hearty meal, he mounted Brick's horse and rode back upon the trail, a smile upon his ugly face, while he chuckled:

"Ther feller are cunnin' but he didn't know I had seen him afore without his mask, ther day he were dressin' in ther tepee."

"Waal, things looks hopeful; but with all my squintin' at ther cabing, I c'u'dn't get a look at thet poor gal; but she are thar, an' she hev got friends not far away."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CHASE THAT ENDED DISASTROUSLY.

FRANK POWELL was not destined to return to his little camp without another adventure, and one which also proved serious.

Indeed, the day seemed to be a fated one for him.

He was riding leisurely along, thinking of his duel with the Gold Buzzard, and mourning over the loss of Janette's miniature, when his eyes fell upon a horseman riding quickly behind a clump of bushes, a few hundred yards down the trail.

Whoever it was, he had seen the Surgeon Scout first, lost, as the latter was once more, in deep reverie.

How many more there might be, Frank Powell could not judge; but it was necessary that he should be on his guard, and he muttered:

"I'll be killed yet from an ambush, if I do not stop brooding and attend to business."

"But, my man, I am ready for you now," and he swung his rifle around ready for use.

This act proved to the one in covert that he had been seen.

The thicket was of small saplings, and by no means a protection to him, while the valley just there was devoid of large trees or bowlders behind which he could take shelter.

Realizing this, and recognizing the Surgeon

Scout, he seemed to prefer to trust to the heels of his horse than to a personal encounter.

Instantly he dashed out from his covert, like an arrow from a bow.

The moment he did so Frank Powell cried:

"Kendrick the Deserter, as I live!"

Into the flanks of his horse sunk his spurs, and in a second he was in full pursuit.

On land, as on sea, a stern chase is a long one, and the deserter courier had fully two hundred yards' start of the surgeon.

He knew that Frank Powell meant to kill him for the part he had played in kidnapping Janette, and with terror at his heart, he urged his horse to his top speed.

"If I can only keep ahead until night, I can dodge him in the darkness," he cried, anxiously.

He was well mounted, but his horse had been days on the trail, though coming slowly.

He too had determined to follow Captain Kit, and still cast his fortunes with those of the outlaw chief, for he knew full well to remain on the prairie, with the remnant of the Red Angel band, would be to soon be captured and shot for a deserter, if not hanged for an outlaw.

Perhaps he might fall into the power of Frank Powell, and this thought was fearful to him.

He had fled from the canyon, the night his comrades fell, and the flash of the surgeon's revolvers had shown him who it was upon his track.

Then he had escaped, and his movements since had been most wary until he could strike the trail of Captain Kit leading down to Colorado.

Would he escape now? He hoped, he prayed so, and he kept his spurs tearing into the sides of his horse to urge him along.

Kirk Kendrick was not naturally a coward, and he would have boldly faced another man; but not Frank Powell, whom he had always looked upon as bearing a charmed life.

The thought that he had no chance for life, pitted against the surgeon, unnerved him, and he fled with all the terror of a guilty conscience.

Fearing to follow the trail he turned off of it abruptly, and dashed away over a rugged piece of land.

Instantly Powell followed him, and he was slowly but surely gaining.

This the deserter saw as he glanced over his shoulder, and it caused the straining horse to suffer more.

Suddenly a deep chasm appeared before him.

It was a big leap to force any horse to take, but, picking out the narrowest part, where a point jutted out a few feet, he rode his horse straight toward it.

It was a ravine, that had cut its way downward some twenty feet, and in the bottom was a small stream, with here and there a rock and a pool of water.

Straight for the ravine the deserter urged his horse.

He seated himself well in the saddle, got his reins well in hand, pulled his hat hard down over his brow, and nerved himself for the desperate leap.

The horse saw what was expected of him, and nerved himself also for the mighty task.

His master needed to urge him no more now, for he ran like the wind, his head erect, and his ears laid back.

Nearer and nearer, straight for the little point which lessened the width of the ravine by several feet, the horse drew.

Then, with a gathering of himself together, he shot into the air.

Kirk Kendrick felt the little point give beneath him, and heard the rattle of the stones as they fell; but his eyes were fixed on the other bank, and a wild, exultant yell burst from his lips as his horse came down in safety.

One hind foot crushed the brittle earth away and slipped downward; but the noble horse quickly caught himself and then dashed on.

Expecting a shot, Kirk Kendrick bent low in the saddle.

But no shot came, for Frank Powell wanted to take the man alive.

On he pressed, straight for the point, determined to take the leap.

When the deserter saw this, he glanced over his shoulder, his face writhing with excitement.

He saw the Surgeon Scout settle himself in his saddle, the splendid horse gather himself for the leap, and then make the spring.

But the little point gave way beneath the weight, and, as he saw horse and rider go down into the depths, the deserter shouted:

"Ha! ha! Frank Powell, you have followed me to your death!"

But, though he had seen the Surgeon Scout go down into the ravine, and believed that he had gone to his death, Kirk Kendrick did not draw rein.

It is true that he allowed his horse to slacken his pace, and then made a circuit to get back upon the trail he had been following before the chase; but he muttered:

"No, I'll not go back, for he might not be dead, and I wish to take no chances with Frank Powell."

"I am safe, and I'll press right on after Captain Kit."

CHAPTER XXV.

DEVIL JIM'S CURIOSITY.

As luck would have it for Devil Jim, he missed meeting Kirk Kendrick upon the trail the afternoon he left Monkton at his cabin, for the deserter was flying before Powell, and the circuit he made brought him again upon the track, after the one-armed outlaw had passed along.

Now Devil Jim was of a most curious turn of mind.

He came upon the trail of Frank Powell, and that of the Gold Buzzard, where they had their meeting.

Dismounting, he had examined the ground carefully, and said aloud:

"Thar has been a cirkis here, an' somebody has stirred up the animiles; but it are a notch above me ter onderstan' jist what hev happened."

"I sees no stiff's lyin' round loose, an' ther two trails goes off ag'in, so I'll stick to ther one ther Doc left ahind him."

After awhile he came upon tracks that caused him to halt again.

"Ther Doc hes see suthin' thet hes made him whoop her up jist here, fer his animile hev gone off like a rocket right from this here spot."

Riding on, he came to the trail of the deserter's horse.

"I see; he seen ther Doc an' lit out fer thet thicket."

"Seein' ther Doc meant biz from ther jump, he jist sailed out down the trail lickerty-split."

"Waal, they was playin' a lively tune here, an' no mistake."

Now, who were this pilgrim thet hurried ther Doc arter him so, I wonder?

"My medicine pard must hev know'd him, fer he don't take ter strangers thet way onless they urges it."

"I don't git onto ther hoof-track o' the pilgrim; but it must be somebody belonging to ther band."

"Anyhow, I judges thet he knows ther Doc."

"Yas, he hes scooted off here, an' ther Doc arter him."

"Waal, I were born cur'us, an' I has jist female cur'osity 'nuff ter wish ter see what kind o' 'musement ther Doc hed, an' ef he ketched the feller an' hed some fun with him."

"So here I goes on ther trail, all fer cur'osity."

With this, Devil Jim branched off from the trail, following the tracks left by the horses of Frank Powell and the deserter.

He was not long in coming in sight of the ravine.

"Lordy! how did they climb over that?" he asked himself.

Drawing nearer, he continued:

"Ef thet gerloot rid his hoss over thar, he were skeeter than a jack-rabbit with a pararer fire ahint him, an' ther crittur were a tassle top on ther jump."

"Then ag'in, if Doc Powell rid his hoss arter him, ther pilgrim ahead were somebody he wanted badder than I ever wanted 'em."

A moment more and he drew rein at the ravine, and, while a cry escaped him, he sprung from his horse, and, at the risk of his neck, slid down the precipitous bank to the bottom of the gulch.

"Well, Jim, here I am," said Frank Powell, pleasantly, as he arose and shook himself, for he was dripping wet.

But immediately he sat down again, and putting his hand to his head, continued:

"I am a little shaky yet, I see."

"Yas, thar you is, an' thar is yer horse; but ef he hain't dead I are a liar, an' it are a wonder you hain't."

"Yes, it killed my horse, Jim, but I saved myself by falling on him, and into that pool; but the shock was fearful, and I have been lying here stunned, for I only recovered as you came down that bank like a snow-sled."

"Yas, you was shook up, an' is yet feelin' it, while look at thet animile."

"Why, he hev ev'ry rib bu'sted in on one side, his two legs is broke, an' his head are under water so he is drowned dead."

"But here I is, an' yonder are my hoss, so I says let us git out o' this, ef yer legs hain't druv up inter yer body so as yer can't walk, an' ef they is I kin carry yer."

"I will have to ask you to aid me, Jim, for I do feel like an old stove-up cavalry horse, I admit."

"Yer look it, Doc; but let me hunt a way out o' this hole an' carry yer saddle an' bridle, an' then I'll come back fer you."

He drew the trappings off of the horse, shouldered them and disappeared.

In a short while he returned, leading his horse, and with the Doctor's saddle fastened on behind his own.

"I struck a trail down here, Doc, so mount my critter, an' we'll go on ter camp."

With an effort, though aided by his One-armed Pard, Frank Powell mounted the horse, and they set off for their camp, Devil Jim walking by the side of the animal.

It was dark before they reached the little camp, for Jim took good care to cover up their

tracks, where they turned off from the trail, and that delayed them.

Then Frank Powell knew that he had received a severe shock, though no bones were broken.

Jim soon had a blazing fire, and looked after the horses, after which he cooked supper, the Surgeon Scout feeling the necessity of keeping quiet.

After the meal, as the two were together in their little shanty, the Surgeon Scout lying down, Devil Jim asked:

"Was it a bird yer was arter ter-day when yer thoughted yer had wings ter fly across thet valley yer tumbled inter?"

"Yes, it was a *rara avis* that I wanted much to cage."

"A what, Doc?"

"A bird bearing the name of Kendrick the Deserter."

"Jist hear yer shoutin'! Were it now?"

"It was."

"Waal, he flew away, thet bird, he did?"

"Yes; but some day I hope to clip his wings so that he cannot fly."

"Wouldn't wonder if yer did, Doc; but he are arter ther cap'n, too."

"So it seems; I had no idea he was so good a trailer; but did you find the outlaw's lair?"

"Now I should think so, Doc," and Devil Jim went on to tell what had happened at the cabin, to ail of which the Surgeon Scout listened most attentively.

"Well, Jim, you have done well; but how nicely you caught him without his mask."

"Yas, Doc."

"And you could see nothing of poor Janette?"

"Not a sign of her, an' I dar'n't ask him."

"You were right; but she must be there."

"Sart'in, as he hev located, fer yer see he are a miner now, an' says his claim are goin' ter pan out han'some."

"Now, Doc, I'd concluded I'd better come back an' post you jist all I knowed, an' then git back ag'in, I'arn ther ropes, an' then lay a plan fer us ter act some moonshiny night."

"That is the best plan, Jim; but when you see Janette, my poor little wife, tell her that we intend to rescue her, and that I am on a red trail of retribution to avenge her," and the sorrowing man spoke with intense feeling.

"I'll see her and tell her, Pard Doc."

"But, Jim, I will be unfit for work for several days, perhaps a week, for I had a rough day of it, and am as sore here as though I had been wounded in earnest, while I ache in every joint," and he placed his hand over his heart where the miniature had been shattered by the Gold Buzzard's bullet.

"Pard Doc, ther desarter wasn't ther only man yer seen ter-day, were he?"

"No, Jim, I met another gentleman of his ilk, and passed the compliments of this part of the country with him," and the Surgeon Scout told of his meeting with the Gold Buzzard captain.

"I hes heerd o' them Gold Buzzards, Doc, an' they do say ther cap'n are a pararer fire turned loose when he gits on ther war-path."

"He is the one you have to look out for, Jim, as you have his treasure," said the Doctor, with a smile.

"Oh, I'll look out fer him, an' fer ther treasure, too, Doc."

"I do not doubt it, Jim; but how are you feeling to-night?"

"Not as lively as a Gov'ment mule, Doc."

"So I thought, and we will both take a good night's rest, and to-morrow you go on your good work, while I lie here crippled."

"Never mind, the end of our long trail will yet be reached, Jim, mark my words."

"I believes you, Doc," said Devil Jim, as he threw more wood on the fire, and then, getting in between his blankets, he sunk to rest like one who slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SUSPICION AROUSED.

"HELLO!"

The sound came from across the river; in the darkness, and those who heard it and were chatting together, became at once silent.

"Hello!"

Again the hail was repeated, and this time it was answered by Paul Monkton, who, with his men, sat a ound the camp-fire where Brick was cooking supper.

The fire was protected from the view of any one passing in the canyon by a stockade wall, or fence, which would also stop any bullet that might be fired across at long range.

But the glare of the flames arose above the stockade, and had evidently attracted the attention of some one out on the canyon trail.

Where the men were seated they were also shielded from sight, and the fence ran to the rear corner of the cabin, so that one could walk to and from Brick's "kitchen" and be wholly protected.

"Hello yourself!" shouted back Monkton, in answer to the hail.

"I am Kendrick; do you know me?"

"Ho, Kendrick, are that you?" called out Bonanza Bill, when Monkton said to him:

"If he is one of your men, answer him, and let him come in."

"Yes, and I'm looking for the captain," called back the deserter.

"All right, we'll let you over."

"Send him to me in the cabin, Brick, for he doubtless has news for me," said Monkton, rising and going into the house.

In a few minutes the man was ushered into the cabin by Brick, who turned away and left him there.

Monkton sat at the table, upon which he had written the lines that betrayed him to Janette.

His head was bent over, and the lamp was so arranged as to throw the light full upon the deserter, and to keep him in shadow.

"Well, my man, have you any news for me?" he asked.

"No, sir; I expected to see the captain."

"Captain Kit is not here, but I serve in his stead."

"Where are you just from?"

"I came from the last camp, sir, and followed the trail here; but are you Mr. Monkton, the young ranchero, who lived near the Prairie Rest Ranch?"

"Yes, I am the same, Kirk Kendrick, and I am one who was guilty with you of a crime against Richard Joslyn, my adopted father and your benefactor."

"Oh, God! has the grave given up its dead? You are—"

And the man paused, trembling from head to foot, white as a ghost, and with his eyes striving to pierce the darkness beyond the lamp.

"I am known as Paul Monkton here, Kirk, for I took my uncle's name, hoping to be his heir, if all my other plans failed, though he has little to leave."

"See! have I changed much?"

He turned the lamp-reflector full upon his face, and sat there smiling—a handsome man, with a face that belied his black heart and nature.

"Ha! now I know you as—"

"As what, Kirk?"

"As Captain Kit—no, his mustache and hair were blonde, and—"

"Oh, that was a wig and false mustache, Kirk."

"Yes, you are Captain Kit, and now I know who it is that forced me to desert from the army."

"Do you wish revenge, Kirk?"

"Oh, no, I have accepted my fate; but, Paul, you are a very devil to do all that you have done."

"Thank you, Kirk, my dear old friend, for your opinion is worth knowing; but let me tell you that I am known to the men here as Monkton, the representative of Captain Kit, and I am working a mine that will pan out largely, so you can have a share with me if you will."

"I followed Captain Kit here to serve him, so, of course, am the more willing to serve you, now that I know who you are."

"But where is Miss Janette?"

"She is not here, and—"

"Not here?"

"Why did you not—"

"We will not speak of her, Kirk, other than to say she was lonesome here, so went to visit friends."

"Now come out and have supper, for there sounds Brick's tocsin, and you know he is no slouch of a cook."

"Indeed he is not; but do you not fear being trailed here?"

"By whom?"

"Surgeon Powell."

"Hardly, for the trail is cold now, and—"

"I followed it, cold as it was, and I observed certain signs that led me to believe they were left purposely."

"What kind of signs?"

"Oh, a chip off of a tree, a knife-hole there, and various other signs that appeared to be left as guides to some one following."

"Indeed! this is remarkable; but certainly I have no traitor with me, for I can trust Bonanza Bill and Denver Dick, and besides Brick and Janette, they were all that were with me."

"Yet the signs were there for all that."

"I do not understand it— Ha! there was one arrived early this afternoon, and who told me of your return and flight from the canyon."

"Who was that?"

"Dead Knife Jim."

"Ah! but he is to be trusted, is he not?"

"Yes, I never had any cause to doubt him, though he did form a strange and extravagant fancy for Surgeon Powell, after he shot him and then amputated his arm."

"But how did he know of my flight from the canyon?"

"He returned there after it, he told me, and found one of your men yet alive, and heard it from him."

"Yes, I just had time to get off with Doc Powell hard after me; but he lost me in the darkness, and I then came on after you."

"But Dead Knife Jim beat you here."

"I went to the prairie first, hoping to see some of the boys, and then come by slow stages."

"Well, I am glad you have come, Kirk, for now that you know who I am, we can be pards as in olden times, and my little family is complete, for with my four miners, yourself, Brick, myself, and Dead Knife, we are eight, no mean showing if attacked."

"But I don't like what you tell me about the signs on the trail, and it arouses my suspicions about Devil Jim."

"Where is he now?"

"Gone back on the trail to see if there are any signs of our being followed."

"Ah! when do you expect him?"

"To-morrow some time."

"Well, we can trap him."

"How?"

"If he comes back see what report he gives."

"I don't exactly get your meaning."

"I have come over the trail."

"Yes."

"Then see if he reports my trail."

"I see."

"And the trail of one other."

"Who?"

"Frank Powell."

"What?" and the outlaw chief was upon his feet.

"It is true."

"Then he is here?"

"He is back on the trail, but whether alive or dead, I do not know."

"Kendrick, tell me just what you mean," said Monkton, earnestly.

"I will tell you all about it," was the answer, and the deserter told the story of his chase and escape.

"In Satan's name! why did you not go back and kill him?"

"I was not certain that he was not dead."

"Why did you not return to see?"

"I was afraid he was alive."

"How deep was the ravine?"

"About twenty feet, I judge."

"The bottom?"

"Pools of water, hard earth and rocks."

"I trust he is dead."

"So do I; but thinking of his miraculous escapes, I concluded not to go back, as I might find myself covered by a revolver when I peeped over to see."

"Well, to-morrow I will go and see."

"Better not."

"He has not come here alone."

"You think his brothers are with him?"

"Yes, and more, Surgeon Powell was once in the mines down this way, and is very popular."

"If he came alone, you may be certain that he will find men enough here to help him should he make war against you."

"True, but he is not one to ask aid."

"I know it; but I advise you not to go out alone."

"Send one of your men, but don't let him know that Powell has been seen, or he won't go further than out of sight of your cabin and lie there until night, and then come in and report."

"I believe you are right."

"I know I am, for I wouldn't go, and prefer to remain in this snug place, for snug and safe it is."

"Do you know I feared I would have to stay out in the woods to-night, but kept on after dark looking for a good camping-place, when I saw the reflection of your fire and came to it in a hurry."

"Well, I am more than glad you have come; but I will wait for Devil Jim to return, and if I catch him deceiving me I'll kill him."

"But come, let us go out to supper now, and remember, I will tell the boys I found in you an old friend."

With this Monkton led the way to the kitchen, and it appeared to be a jolly party that sat around the blazing logs that night, but a jolly party at heart or not, it certainly was a villainous one.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FACING THE ORDEAL.

IN spite of his nerve, Monkton felt worried at what he had heard from the lips of Kirk Kendrick.

He knew that Frank Powell, after all, had tracked him.

How many more were with him, he did not know; but he did not doubt that his brothers were along, for he had not heard of the wounding of Night Hawk and Broncho Bill at their attack on the canyon the night he had fled with Janette.

If those three men were on his trail, he knew that he was in danger, and, more especially so, if Devil Jim was their ally, as the suspicions, aroused by Kendrick, half-led him to believe.

The Wizard Trio, and Devil Jim, made a most dangerous quartette, and one which he and his party of seven all told, must take at great disadvantage to subdue.

Jack was a fiend in a fight he knew, while Bonanza Bill and Denver Dave were splendid stand-bys, but with a wholesome fear of the Powells, and particularly of the surgeon.

Moseley, he was aware, had been in many encounters, and having the reputation of being a dangerous man, he did not expect him to fail him.

As for Kirk Kendrick, he felt that he was to be relied on, as long as he fought with a rope around his neck, while Brick would stand by his side and die in his tracks if he told him to do so.

But then all had a wholesome fear of the Powells, while Brick, Bonanza Bill and Denver Dave believed that the Surgeon Scout could not be killed, the negro swearing even that he was protected by Satan.

Feeling as he did, Monkton determined to request the miners to remain at the cabin that night, and they were more than willing, Brick giving them ample bedding to make them comfortable in one of the rooms of the cabin.

In another slept Monkton and Kirk Kendrick, while Brick stretched himself out in his kitchen, with his feet to the fire, a habit he indulged in both summer and winter.

No guard was kept, for none was necessary, as no one would dare attempt to cross the stream, and no one could get over on the little shore in any other way without wings, for the high above it was impossible for the foot of man to scale, and hence there could be no descending from the cliffs, as the Powells had done in the little canyon.

The morning broke bright and beautiful, and there was no one in sight, up or down the canyon, as far as the eye could reach, so, after an early breakfast the few miners went to the claim to begin their first day's work in digging for the precious metals.

Monkton and Kirk Kendrick accompanied them, and all were delighted at their first success, for the claim threatened to pan out well.

Returning to dinner after the meal, Monkton and Kendrick laid off for a smoke and talk, while the others went back to their work, and Brick mounted his horse and started out for some game.

Hardly had he ridden up the canyon when a horseman appeared in sight below.

"Dead Knife Jim," cried the deserter, eagerly.

"Yes; now we will know what he has to say for himself; but I should not think he would return if he is in league with the Powells."

"It may be to get points for them to act upon."

"Perhaps; but we will soon see."

The bridge had been left down by Brick, so that Devil Jim rode across, turned his horse loose, and came up to Monkton and the deserter.

"Ho, pard, you is here, is yer?" he cried, as he saw Kendrick.

"Yes, how are you, Dead Knife?"

"Pretty well, consid'rin'; but now I kin git onto some tracks I seen down ther valley some mile back."

"Did you hev a race with anybody?"

"Yes."

"Good! Now, cap'n, fer I must call yer so, seein' as you is boss in this lay-out, I hev been puzzlin' my mind to a great extent at what I seen back yonder," and Dick addressed Monkton, who said:

"Well, out with it, Jim."

"Waal, I got onto a trail tnet I c'u'dn't onderstan', an' then up come another trail, an' I seen suthin' hed gone wrong with somebody."

"One man were chasin' another, an' follerin' up ther tracks, I seen whar ther one who were gettin' chased hed jumped his boss over a ravine thet were great, an' t'other hed gone in."

"Killed?" cried Monkton, eagerly.

"What I seen kilt in ther ravine were not a man, but a boss."

"Ah!"

"Oh!"

Both of the above were ejaculations of disappointment.

"Ther boss were smashed in fer keeps; but ther one as rid him he jist lighted out in some way."

"Waal, I c'u'd trace thet thar hed been some one else come thar to ther ravine, an' led his boss down into it, as I c'u'd see, which give me ther idee ther man as owned ther stove-up boss were hurted."

"I follered ther trail to ther valley, an' thar I lost it fer ther night."

"But next mornin' I tuk it up ag'in, but c'u'dn't find whar it went, so I giv it up, an' tuk up ther tracks o' ther man thet got over ther ravine."

"Waal, he made a big circuit an' come round inter ther trail ag'in, an' thar hed other bosses passed along durin' ther night, an' so I lost it."

"But, cap'n, who does yer think were on ther boss thet didn't make it in ther jump over ther ravine?"

"Who was it, Jim?"

"Of course I didn't see him, an' I ore glad of it, fer I hain't hankerin' ter meet him, tho' I does think he are all white; but I know'd ther boss, an' it were a critter thet belonged to White Beaver."

"Powell?"

"Yas."

"The Surgeon Scout?"

"Thet same."

"It did belong to him, Jim, for he chased Kendrick here."

"Waal, waal! an' you made the jump, pard?"

"Yes; my horse went over in safety."

"It looked to me as tho' ther ground hed give way under ther second critter."

"So I thought, for the horse did not seem to rise well in his leap; but do you think that Surgeon Powell's brothers are with him?"

"I does; fer it don't seem natural that they'd let him come on this long trail alone."

"You are right, Jim; the Trio must be together."

"Thar's one way to find out, cap'n."

"How, Dead Knife?"

"Ter see."

"How do you mean?"

"I kin go an' find out."

"Well, Jim, you'll do me a favor if you would," said Monkton with some eagerness.

"Yas; an' I'll do myself a favor, too, fer ef them Powell pards is in this locality, cap'n, I'm a-thinkin' ther lay-out better be formed as soon as possible, an' then you take what men yer hev got an' go at night an' bounce 'em, fer thet are what Cap'n Kit w'u'd do ef he were here, an' yer may be sart'in they is hangin' 'round fer no good, an' means ter get ther gal Cap'n Kit runned off with."

"That is my idea, Jim; but when will you start on your scout to find out?"

"I are putty tired to-day, cap'n, but will light out late this arternoon."

Monkton was anxious to have him go at once, but he could not ask it, and, as Devil Jim threw himself down to rest, for he was not yet wholly strong, nor his wound fully healed, he said to Kendrick, as the two walked off together:

"He is square, Kirk."

"Oh, yes; there is no doubt of that now, Paul," was the answer, and without a feeling of suspicion against Devil Jim, they saw him ride away that night just as Brick was sounding his tocsin to call the miners to supper.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DEVIL JIM'S RETURN.

THE click of an iron shoe against a stone aroused Powell from his slumber as he lay in his lonely camp.

Instantly he was on the alert, his rifle ready.

He was sore in every joint, and in no condition for a death-struggle, but yet he would face it as best he could if it came.

"Halt, I command you!"

His voice was stern and his eyes were fixed upon the shadowy forms of a horse and rider in the darkness.

"It are me, Pard Doc."

"Ah, Jim, I had your couch, for I did not expect you back to-night, and I see that you are mounted upon a white horse, when you rode off on a bay."

"Yas, Doc, I changed critters, an' I concluded ter come back ter-night an' hev a leetle chin-chin with you," and Devil Jim dismounted and staked out his horse, after which he came and threw some wood on the fire, and then sat down.

"There is some supper there, Jim."

"Don't keer fer any, Doc, fer ther nigger filled me up afore I left."

"And you saw the chief?"

"Now I did, an' more, I seen ther desarter."

"Kendrick?"

"Thet same."

"He got there, then?"

"Yas, an' he told his story, an' thar war a leetle game up ag'in me, which I seen by ther looks of ther two, an' ther questions, so I shaped my trail accordin', told how I hed struck ther tracks o' ther desarter, an' found whar yer horse hed been stove in—"

"Did you say my horse, Jim?"

"Sart'in, fer ther desarter knowed it were you arter him, so I made myself solid by tellin' all I knew, yer see, Doc."

"I guess it was the best plan."

"Yas, an' I hinted thet yer wasn't alone, an' thet yer brothers was with yer."

"Poor fellows, I wish they were."

"So does I, fer we c'u'd wipe out thet nest in no time."

"You know all who are there?"

"Thar's Bonanza Bill, Denver Dave, ther desarter, an' two gerloots ther cap'n hes hed keepin' ther mine fer him, an' another which I hev not hed ther honor o' a acquaintance."

"Then ther nigger and ther cap'n."

"Seven."

"That are right, Doc."

"Well, what other discoveries did you make?"

"I skeert 'em by sayin' yer were here with yer pard brothers, an' so ther cap'n decided ter hev ther four men thet worked ther claim sleep over at ther cabin o' nights, an' they'll be safe thar ef anywhar, ther Lord knows, fer it are ther most best leetle nest ter keep safe in I ever seen," and Jim described the place fully.

"I know the spot Jim, and was one of the first white men that ever went up that canyon."

"There was no cabin on it then, or bridge to cross the stream, but I went over all the same."

"Doc, does yer mean it?"

"I do, Jim, and we will go that way some time."

"Ther Lord be marcful, but what a surprise it w'd be to 'em."

"I found the way out one day through an Indian guide who was my friend, and he was killed soon after, so I do not believe any one knows the secret but myself, unless it is known to the chief."

"It may be, fer he sneaks round like a cat o' nights, an' finds out all he kin put his nose inter."

"And he keeps his whole force with him now at night?"

"Yas, cap'n, and I thoughted as how I c'd reconnoiter a leetle ter-morrer night, fer I'd take a look at ther mine an' see what thar is in a couple o' leetle cabins I seen on ther mountain-side, an' which ther nigger said as war ther homes o' ther miners afore the cap'n come."

"Well, Jim, be cautious, and I only wish I was able to go with you."

"No, you git yerself all right ag'in while I does ther lookin' round an' gits all ready fer ther move."

"I kin get them off ther guard, an' then it will be time fer us ter move tergether, so don't yer worry."

"I'll lay low here until late ter-morrer arternoon, an' then I'll go an' hev a leetle look in ther canyon all by myself."

"And, Jim, did you see Janette?" suddenly asked the surgeon, and the question had been the first one he wished to put to the outlaw; but then he knew the way of his One-armed Pard, and that in time he would come round to all that had happened.

But he was too impatient to wait longer, so asked the question.

"Pard Doc, I didn't see her, an' she hain't thar."

"Not there?" cried Powell in amazement.

"No, Doc, I hunted round an' got thet much knowledge from thet close-mouthed nigger."

"Then where is she?"

"Thet are what I wants ter find out by lookin' round; but she hain't thar, as I were all over ther cabin an' inter everything on ther leetle patch o' land."

"My God! can he have killed her?" groaned Powell.

"No, Doc, he hev jest hid her away somewhere, so as, ef yer did git thar, yer wouldn't find her."

"But I believe it can be did, an' I begins s'archin' arter sunset ter-morrer."

"Now let us git a leetle slumber, fer I are a trifle weary."

"You good fellow, I know that you are not well yourself, so get what sleep you can, and to-morrow will rest you, while I will also give you some medicine that will help you."

"Ah! if I only felt able to go with you and end this horrible suspense."

"Don't fret, Doc, fer it only keeps yer back."

"Jist keep cool an' git well, an' then we'll wake 'em up."

"You are right, Jim, fretting will only keep me lying here."

"I will dismiss all worry and wait," and, with the great power he possessed over himself, he lay back upon his blanket bed and was soon fast asleep, with Devil Jim following his example, neither dreaming of or caring what the morrow might usher in for him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MOSELEY PLAYS A "LONE HAND."

THE party at the Monkton claim sat around the blazing logs, in the little stockade shelter that formed Brick's kitchen.

The day's work had panned out well over in the claim and the men were encouraged by their labor.

Monkton had looked over the little bags of dust gloatingly, and congratulated himself that at that rate he would soon be able to go and dwell in cities, where he could live a life congenial to his tastes.

He felt certain that the four men were stealing from him, but then he expected that, and if he employed others to work the mine they would do the same.

He thought of putting Kirk Kendrick over them as overseer, but knowing him to be at heart a thief, he concluded to let the four workers steal their little mite each day, as second thought convinced him that the desert-or would purloin more than the entire quartette.

He was well satisfied with his day's work, and they were chatting over the matter when Kirk Kendrick spoke of Devil Jim.

"He may be in to-night, and maybe not; but I am convinced that he is discovering something of importance, or he would not stay away," assured Monkton.

"You are satisfied then that he is faithful?"

"Oh, yes; for I think he proved it this arternoon. What is it, Moseley?" and the chief turned to the miner who just then sprung to his feet.

"I may be wrong, but I thought I saw a light flash over there in the cabin."

All gazed fixedly toward the cabin near the

mine, stepping away from the glare of the fire light to the better see.

But no second glimmer was visible, and Monkton said:

"I guess it was a spark that passed before your eyes, Moseley."

"No; I am the more confident that it was the glimmer of a light."

"Maybe yer hes been drinkin' too hard, pard, an' hes got ther lightnin'-bugs?" suggested Bonanza Bill.

"Well, I am so well convinced that I did see a light, that I am willing to go there and see."

"Alone, pard?" asked Jack.

"Yes, alone."

"Yer'll lay out on t'other side o' ther creek, an' sw'ar yer hes been thar," remarked Denver Dave.

"Oh, I know that seeing Surgeon Powell round has scared you all pretty bad, but I am not afraid to go and satisfy myself whether I am right or wrong."

"Bring us suthin' from ther cabin ter show thet you were thar," again suggested Bonanza Bill.

"I'll do it, or I'll stay there all night, to show you that I am not afraid," answered Moseley, nettled by the jeers of his comrades.

"I will feel obliged, Moseley, if you would sift the matter, if you are convinced that you saw a light, for some one may be working the claim," said Monkton.

"I'll go at once, sir."

"Leave us a lock o' yer ha'r, Mose, pervidin' ag'in yer meetin' ther Doctor Scout," called out Bonanza Bill.

"Yas, an' whisper ter me whar ter find yer leetle bag o' dust yer hes laid aside, in case yer should tarn yer toes up to ther starlight," Denver Dave cried after him.

"If you get in trouble, sound your whistle, Moseley, and we will come to your rescue," remarked Monkton, while Brick said:

"Massa, ef ye'r goin' ober dar yer better w'ar dis yer charm o' Fetich."

"It are black cat's claw, yaller dog's tooth, old woman's toe-nail, knife-blade, bullet, gold ring, all tie tergedder wid white baby's ha'r, an' put in dis little bag o' tanned nigger-skin."

"Best charm ter keep off de debble, witches an' death I ever seen."

"Get out with your devilish charm, Brickbat."

"Why it would scare me to wear it."

"It hab sabbie heap o' people, massa."

"Better wear him round yer neck, sah, for old witch give it to me."

"Curse you and the old witch, for I am no superstitious fool," and Moseley walked indignantly away.

"Better take some speerits afore ye go, Mose, so as yer'll be pards with any yer meets over thar," yelled Bonanza Bill.

But Moseley had gone, and Jack let him across the bridge.

Once on the other bank he walked rapidly toward the cabin, muttering as he went along.

"I was afraid Monkton would send somebody with me, and that would have spoiled all, for I must hide that gold to-night, or some of them will find it."

"Oh, yes, I'll stay there all night, and I'll work the mine, too, and go to bed just before daylight, and let 'em find me there."

"I'll work hard for Monkton, but I'll not forget Moseley Seymour all the same, for I'm getting tired of the mines, and want a nest egg to leave on."

"That was a good dodge of mine, to pretend to see a light, and it worked well, too; but I must halt here, and watch to see that that sly Monkton does not follow me, or send that nigger wizard."

"Bah! his old charm of toe-nails, teeth and cat's claws make me shudder."

"And yet was I right to refuse the charm?"

"Somehow I don't feel right to-night, and I wish I had taken it now."

"Ah, mel it is just ten years ago to-night since I killed my wife, and that is what makes me blue."

"But the glitter of the gold will enliven me up."

"No, I am not followed, so I will go in now."

So saying, he arose from behind a tree where he had been crouching, and continued on his way toward the cabin near the mine, walking rapidly.

Suddenly he halted, and looked around him in the darkness.

"I thought I heard a sound."

"Some prowling wolf, or bear I guess."

"I do not mind them, but I would hate to meet that man Powell they talk so much about."

"Here in the mines I have heard him talked of as the Magic Doctor, and up on the prairies they call him the Wizard Doctor and Surgeon Scout, and the deeds he performs are wonderful."

"They say he is after Captain Kit, Monkton and the rest of us, and they are all afraid of him, and I may be too, when I meet him."

"No, I hear no other sound, so will go on."

And once more he walked on his way, never seeing a tall form gliding behind him as silently as an Indian, and dogging his steps with the pertinacity of a hound.

CHAPTER XXX.

A WOMAN AVENGED.

THE one who was on the track of Moseley stopped when he saw him approach the mine and enter it.

For some minutes he was absent, and then returned out of the cavernous place, and walked toward the cabin.

The watcher remained in his covert without moving.

By some secret contrivance he opened the door and entered, closing it behind him.

The watcher at once glided up to the door and stood in an attitude of listening.

He heard the man moving within and muttering to himself.

By accident he touched the door and it gave under the pressure.

"Ah!"

This exclamation escaped his lips, and through the open space he got a view within.

Moseley had not put up the bar inside when he entered.

He was seated at a table and before him was a buckskin bag, with little pieces of gold scattered out in confusion.

"That is a snug little sum," he muttered. "And it will soon be added to, for I intend to be generous with myself."

"Well, I must hide it away in the hills, for I have been on thorns the whole time it was in the cave, fearing the boys would hit upon it."

"What I lay aside each day as toll, I can put in my pocket, until I can get a chance to hide it with this."

"I did think I'd stay here to-night; but, somehow, I feel strangely nervous, so will go back across the river and to-morrow will be all right."

"But I must take something with me from the cabin to show them that I came here, or they won't believe it."

"Oh! I'll take my jug over for the negro to fill for me when he goes to Celestial City after stores."

He had been sitting with his back to the door, so that the watcher did not see his face.

Scraping up his gold and putting it back into the bag, he tied it up securely, and rising, craned over and took a large jug from the shelf.

He had lighted two candles, which stood in wooden stands upon the table.

Crossing over to these he bent to blow them out, the jug in one hand, the bag of gold in the other.

But a cry startled him, and looking up he beheld before him the tall form of the man who had dogged his steps.

It was Devil Jim, and he stood glaring upon the man, while every particle of color had left his face, and even his lips were ashen.

He held his revolver forward, the muzzle covering Moseley, while he said in a voice that was hoarse with suppressed feeling, and wholly dropping the border dialect:

"I know ghosts do not talk, and hide gold, and buy whisky, and yet, years ago, I killed a man who was your living image, excepting that time and crime have made some change."

"Are you that man?"

Moseley gazed at the man before him in horror, his jug and gold dropped from his hands, the former shivering to atoms upon the floor.

But he made no effort to raise his hands to his belt, where were his weapons.

Perhaps he was afraid he could not draw before the other shot, but he looked unnerved, wholly so.

"Speak! the man I refer to bore the name of Moseley Seymour."

Still no answer came from the man, who stood now as though he gazed upon an apparition.

"Are you Moseley Seymour?" sternly asked Devil Jim.

"I am," and the words seemed to come involuntarily from his lips.

"Then I did not kill you?"

"No, I recovered from the wound you gave me," and again Moseley spoke as though from no intention to do so but rather from some compulsion he could not resist.

"I am not superstitious, and therefore could not believe you to be Seymour's ghost; but we meet again, face to face, and right here one of us must die, for I suppose you seek revenge against me?"

"But first answer me, if Lucy still lives?"

"No."

"When did she die?"

"Ten years ago to-night."

"Happy girl to be freed from such as you."

"What killed her?"

"I did."

"You!" and Devil Jim's voice trembled.

"Yes."

"By your evil life and cruelty to her?"

"No, I killed her and fled to save my neck from the gallows."

Through all the man seemed to talk like an automaton, as though he felt himself forced to answer every question.

"Oh God!" and the words broke in anguish from the lips of Devil Jim.

"Lucy dead, and you her murderer!"

"Then, by Heaven, whether you demand vengeance against me or not, for my crime

against your life, I demand your life, Moseley Seymour, to avenge the death of that poor little woman.

"Quick, sir, draw one of those weapons at your belt, and meet me, and I will face you as you please," and Devil Jim tossed the revolver he held in his hand over on the table.

The challenged man seemed to wake up at this, and cry:

"Knives let the weapons be then," he seized his own and sprung toward Devil Jim.

He had sought an advantage, seeing that his old foe possessed but one arm, and that he would have to act with lightning quickness to draw either his other revolver or one of his knives.

But he did not know the man he faced, and that it was not his celerity of movement in drawing and using a knife that had gained for him the name of Dead Knife Jim.

Moseley Seymour, it is true, had not a dozen steps to make toward Devil Jim, and yet before he had advanced half the distance that separated them the famous knife-thrower had drawn his favorite blade and hurled it at his enemy.

Deep into the bosom of Moseley Seymour the blade sunk, and grasping it with one hand, and striving to withdraw it from the wound, and with the other endeavoring to whip out his revolver, the man sunk down before the one who had slain him, crying savagely:

"Curse you! this time you have done for me!"

"Yes, I have avenged a noble little woman, and if I had killed you, Moseley Seymour, the last time we met, I would have saved her dear life."

But Devil Jim spoke to ears that heard not, for Moseley, the miner, was dead.

For a moment Devil Jim stood gazing upon him, his face writhing with emotion.

But then his manner suddenly changed to the old way, and with a laugh, as he bent over and took his knife, he arose and kicked the pieces of the jug aside, and said:

"Waal, yer court-o'-arms went fast, Moseley, an' you follered soon arter."

"So be it. I hes wiped out a stain on ther 'arth, an' I'll now see fit ter take in this leetle bag o' metal, with thanks ter yer fer diggin' it fer me."

He seized the bag as he spoke, shook it, and then bending over he touched his finger in the crimson stain on the dead man's breast, and wrote on the table in distinct lettering:

"ONE BY ONE THE LEAVES DO FALL!"

"That will let 'em know that the autumn are coming for them," he muttered, as he blew out the lights and quietly left the cabin, rapidly retracing his way back to the bank of the stream where he had left his horse.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DISCOVERY.

AFTER the departure of Moseley upon his errand, which Monkton set down as a desire to do his duty as a good scout, but which the reader knows was to hide his stolen gold, the party around the camp-fire discussed the merits of his going with considerable interest.

"Ther man hasn't a coward bone in his body, pards; but I jerked him all ther same," said Bonanza Bill.

"Oh, he's grit clean through, an' as he dis-kivered ther light, he hed ther narve ter see what it were," replied Denver Dave.

"I've found him squar' an' white," put in Jack, while Brick said:

"He had better not refuse de charm I done offer him, fer ef he meet nobody he git kill sure widout it."

"You think it would save him, Brick, if he got into danger?" asked Monkton.

"Yas, massa, it sabe him sure, an' ef he hab harm happen, it 'cause he laugh at de charm, an' I 'spects he hab trouble sure, fer Fetish hain't ter be laff at even by white folks," and it was evident that Brick was hurt at having his charm ridiculed.

Whatever the others thought they kept it to themselves, for Brick was not one to trifle with they all knew, especially if aroused about his superstitious beliefs.

Somewhat anxiously all looked over to the cabin and waited.

At last a light was seen, and all, at once, cried out that it was caused by the opening of the cabin door.

But no signal for help came, and so they waited for a long time.

"Do you think he will be fool enough to carry out his threat, and remain there all night?" asked Monkton of Jack.

"Sart'in, cap'n, he'll stay out of spite."

"Then I for one am going to bed."

This example was quickly followed by the others, Brick saying that he would be ready to lower the bridge for Moseley, should he

return, but adding, in a voice that all heard:

"He laff at my charm, an' maybe he nebb-ber come back, no nebb-ber."

This made all a trifle uncomfortable, and they were up with the dawn to see if anything could be seen of Moseley.

"Go over, Jack, you and Bonanza Bill, and see if you can find him," ordered Monkton.

Off the two men started, and they were seen to enter the cabin, and then rush out again and wave wildly toward those in the stronghold.

"My horse, Brick."

"Come, Kendrick, go with me, and you, Denver Dave, remain with Briek."

"There has been trouble yonder," cried Monkton.

In a few minutes he and Kirk Kendrick were riding at full speed toward the cabin.

"What is it Jack?" called out Major Monkton, as they drew rein and dismounted.

"Thar hes been red work in thar, cap'n."

"Jist look in," said Jack.

Monkton strode into the cabin, followed by Kirk Kendrick.

The shutters had been thrown back, and the sun had risen, so that the interior was perfectly light.

There, on the floor, lay Moseley, one hand grasping his knife, and the wound in his breast showing how he died.

The broken jug was the only evidence of a struggle, and Jack said:

"Thar hain't a thing been disturbed, so 'tain't no robbers hes done this, fer ef it was ther work of the Gold Buzzards, they'd hev cleaned out ther place."

"Did yer read thet, cap'n?" and Bonanza Bill pointed to the table where was the carmine lettering.

"Ha! what is this?"

"One by one the leaves do fall!"

"That is a warning to us, men, and, my word for it, Frank Powell is on our track."

"He hev begun well," said Jack, with a shudder.

"Well, we must bury poor Moseley, and in future knock off work before dark, and keep our eyes open."

"That man means red work, and we cannot be too careful."

"Bonanza Bill, do you see any trails about?"

"None, cap'n: he came on foot ter do this leetle job, an' Moseley must hev gone inter ther cabin an' found him thar."

"But I'm awful glad there were no lick-er in thet jimmy john thet hes been bu'sted," and Bonanza Bill had the look of one who would have regretted the loss of the liquor more than the death of his comrade.

"Well, we will return to breakfast, and then you boys bury poor Moseley."

With this, Monkton mounted his horse, and the others followed him closely, as though they cared not to be left alone, while their eyes roved about in evident search of some foe, or in expectation of a shot from an ambush.

"This won't do, Kendrick, for if another man is killed the rest will become demoralized and leave me."

"I do wish I had the force to hunt that man to his death, for he makes me nervous, striking secretly at us as he has now begun to do."

"Yes, it is calculated to make one nervous; but Dead Knife Jim should surely be in soon."

"I hope so; but then he is a queer one, and if he has discovered anything he will stick to it, if it takes a week, before he returns."

They were now at the bridge, and there Denver Dave met them and heard the dismal story, while Brick, when he learned the fate of Moseley, grinned all over his face with pleasure, and cried as he dropped a venison steak in the ashes:

"Didn't I done tole yer so?"

"He laff at de Fetish charm, he! he! he! I guess he no laff no more."

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN OUTLAW'S YARN.

"THERE comes Dead Knife!" cried Kirk Kendrick, as all got up from breakfast.

All eyes were bent down the canyon,

where Devil Jim was seen riding slowly toward the bridge.

Brick hastened to lower the bridge, and Jim rode up and dismounted with considerable difficulty.

"What is it, Jim, old fellow?" asked Monkton, in a kindly tone, seeing that something had gone wrong with his scout.

"Waal, I hed a leetle scrimmage last night, cap'n, an' as yer sees, t'other side drew blood," and he drew his hunting-shirt aside and showed where he had bandaged a wound, and the bandages were all stained with blood.

"How was this, Jim, and I trust that it is not a serious wound?" cried Monkton.

"It were serious enough fer me, cap'n, tho' it did not go inter my inards, hev'in' glanced on my tough bare ribs; but it are bad enough, an' I'll hev ter lay off a leetle."

"But how was it, Jim?"

"Oh, I struck a trail, an' follered it."

"It led up this way, an' I come on arter."

"Night comed on, an' I jist then seen a man afore me, an' I left my animile an' followed him."

"Cap'n, he went over thar toward ther cabin, an' I missed him in ther bushes; but I went on an' got thar in time ter see a leetle scrimmage atween two men, an' one went down."

"Afore I c'u'd do anything t'other man skipped out o' ther cabin, an' ag'in I lost him."

"But I knowed whar he hed left his crittur, so I run arter mine an' started fer him."

"He were already going off like a streak o' greased lightnin', but I kept up a rapid goin' too, an' thus we hed it."

"Arter a long race he jist then kinder found out thet thar were somebody on his trail, an' he halted fer me ter come up."

"He hed not seen me afore, yer know."

"Waal, arter followin' him like I hed, I didn't intend ter back down, so I jist rode fer him lickety split, my reins in my nut-crackers, an' my revolver ready."

"I begun a shootin', fer I didn't want no missin', an' he shooted but once, an' over I went."

"I wasn't dead, as yer sees, but I played 'possum beautiful, fer my shootin' iron hed gone one way as I went t'other, an' I didn't want ter be 'live enough to encourage another shot."

"So I played dead, while he rode up and looked dawn on me, arter which he jist turned his hoss and rid off."

"And you saw who this man was?"

"You bet I seen him, cap'n, an' he are one thet I ain't anxious to meet often, an' ef I hedn't played 'possum I'd been lyin' over in the valley now with wolves a-chawin' me, ef they wasn't afeard o' bein' p'izened."

"Arter he rid off, I hunted a camp an' did as best as I c'u'd with my wound; but a leetle afore dawn I mounted my critter, an' here I is, as you see."

All had listened to Devil Jim's story with interest, and when he had concluded, Monkton said:

"Now tell us who this man was?"

"Who does yer guess it were, cap'n?"

"Frank Powell?"

"Yer is ther boss at guessin'."

"I knew it; but could you not find the trail to his camp?"

"Yas, cap'n; I kin take yer thar, but I hes ter get better first."

"Did you get near his camp?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"How many has he with him?"

"He an' his brother pards is three, hain't they?"

"Yes."

"Waal, thar was ten sojers in camp besides."

"The deuce there was!"

"There were for a fact."

"Then there is no use of our attempting to attack them, and we had better decamp for awhile and come back when it is safer."

"Now cap'n, don't squall until yer is hurt."

"But, Devil Jim, we have been hurt, for Powell killed one of my comrades last night, and a splendid fellow he was."

"That are one."

"Yes, but another may follow, and another, until we are all picked off, without having an open and square fight."

"Waal, yer hes a place here thet fifty

sojers c'u'dn't take, an' my idee w'u'd be thet yer'd better stay until yer finds it too hot fer yer, an' then yer kin git out.

"Now, Brickbat, ef yer'll dress this wound fer me I'll be obleeged to yer."

This advice of Devil Jim's Monkton decided to follow, and remain at his stronghold; but for the first time in his life he had a nervous sinking of the heart as though he felt that the man whom he had so wronged was destined to yet get full retribution.

That day there was no working in the mine, though all hands except Devil Jim went over to the cabin to bury Moseley, and to take a look about the premises to see if any discoveries could be made.

Hardly had they disappeared, when Devil Jim got up from his couch and began to search the place with an alacrity that looked little like a wounded man.

"She hain't here, thet are sart'in," he said, in a tone of disappointment, hastening back to his bed again.

In a little while Monkton and his comrades returned, and the remainder of the day they were at work, adding to the strength of the place.

But when night came on, Devil Jim could see that they were all moody, and he called out, from where he was lying down and taking it easy:

"Cap'n, I guesses thet by day arter tomorrow I'll be ready fer a ride, an' I'll jist try ag'in ter see ef I can't pick off thet Magic Doctor, fer ef I gits him, then ther rest will git out.

"Anyhow I kin find out jist what they is about."

"I wish you would, if you are able, Jim," answered Monkton, and impressed, in spite of their efforts to shake off the feeling, the outlaws retired to their blankets at an unusually early hour.

The next day again passed without alarm or adventure, and upon the following morning Devil Jim mounted his horse and rode out upon his alleged search for the Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LONG RANGE SHOT.

"WELL, Jim, I certainly am glad to see you, for I was getting most anxious about you," called out Frank Powell, stepping forward and greeting his one-armed pard, as the latter rode into camp a few hours after his departure from the outlaw stronghold.

"I were gittin' anxious, too, Pard Doc, fer I hev'n't been altogether happy sin' I see yer; but I is glad ter find yer up an' stirrin' ag'in."

"Yes, Jim, I am almost as good as new, for the rest has done me good; but you are looking a little haggard."

"I hev been haggard, Pard Doc."

"What has happened, Jim?"

"Waal, in ther fu'st place, I tuk ther trail o' a pilgrim thet I seen leave ther stronghold at night, an' go to ther cabin near ther mine."

"Yes."

"Does yer see this bag o' dust?"

"Yes, and you have quite a mine there."

"Now I hev, an' I tuk it from thet pilgrim."

"He went inter ther cabin, an' I follered him, an', Doc, he were a man I thought was dead, an' who were my rival fer ther love o' a pretty girl I knowed long year ago."

"He got her, too, Doc, an' I thought I hed kilt him, but I hedn't, and he told me with his own lips thet he hed kilt his leetle wife."

"The villain!" said the surgeon, vehemently.

"Yas, but thar are no doubt about his being dead now, Doc, fer I knifed him, an', as I said, thet were his bag o' dust."

"I lighted out, Doc, an' were comin' here, when my hoss tumbled in a hole an' I mighty nigh follered Moseley Seymour, who I hed jist kilt."

"I laid a long time, stunned I reckon, an' I found when I got my senses thet ther wound here hed reopened an' bled some considerable, so I fixes it up as best I c'u'd an' then took a snooze until it were daylight, when back I goes ter ther cap'n's, an' Lordy! yer sh'u'd hev heard ther story I told 'em."

"They were a grievin' o' ther man they hed found in ther cabin, an' were broke up at what I hed writ in his blood on ther table."

"What did you write, Jim?"

"Oh, I recomembered a leetle line o' po'try I knowed long ago, an' thought it w'u'd suit in thet case ter skeer 'em, so I jist wrote,"

"One by one ther leaves do fall."

"That shall be proven true, Jim, if you call these devils the leaves."

"Yas, Doc, they is ther leaves, an' they is bound ter fall."

"But yer doesn't know how it skeert 'em."

"Waal, Doc, I told 'em I hed trailed ther man ter ther cabin, thet rid arter him, an' when he seen me he stopped, an' I begin ter shoot, white he shooted but once an' dropped me to ther ground, when off he rid."

"Of course, Doc, they thought it were you, an' durned ef they didn't stick together oncommon close fer that day an' ther folerin', while at night they were 'feerd o' seein' ghosts."

"I tole 'em thet I hed found your camp, an' Cap'n Kit he said as how they would attack it; but then I told him thar was you, yer brothers an' ten sojers, and so they concluded to light out."

"But I tells 'em ter wait until they was hurted, an' thet I'd make another scout ter look you up an' see what you was doin', fer, Doc, although I looked all over fer ther lady, an' c'u'dn't find her, I are of opinion thet she are hided away somewhar, as I noticed thet ther nigger allus put aside some vittals, an' when nobody were a-lookin' tuk 'em back toward ther cliff."

"Ahl then that proves that Janette is held imprisoned by that fiend."

"Ther nigger are ther only one knows it, then, Doc, fer I hed a leetle talk with t'others, an' they says ther lady went off with Cap'n Kit."

"Well, Jim, you have done well and now let me look at your wound and fix it up for you."

"Oh, ther rest I tuk fixed thet all right ag'in, Doc, an' thet nigger hain't no slouch of a doctor, an' he did ther dressin' of it fer me."

"But now what are to be did?"

"Go back to the stronghold to-morrow and stick to them until you make some important discovery."

"If ther cap'n lights out?"

"Go with him, and mark your trail all you can."

"And what will you do, Doc?"

"I have been recalling this locality to mind, and I can go over the mountain here and come out on the top of the ridge that shelters the stronghold."

"Yas, Doc, but you'll need wings ter git down."

"That may be, Jim, and it may not."

"At any rate do not be surprised if you hear from me to-morrow."

"I'll not be surprised, Doc, fer I knows yer hes some leetle game ter play, an' I'll jist wait until I sees yer hand."

"You shall soon see it, Jim; but now return to the stronghold and tell Captain Kit that you have discovered that I have broken camp, for I shall do so at once and go further up into the mountains with the horses."

"I'll tell him thet yer hes doubtless give up ther hunt."

"Tell him what you please, Jim, and then leave it for me to undeceive him."

"If you have anything of importance to communicate, come here, and follow my trail to where you will find me up further in the mountains."

"All right, Doc, you is ther cap'n, an' I'll see yer through, ef it takes all winter," and as soon as the two had eaten dinner, Devil Jim started upon his return, while Frank Powell took the horses in lead and moved his camp higher up into the mountains.

It was not yet sunset when Devil Jim arrived, and at once all eagerly gathered about him to learn what he had discovered.

"Gone, pards," he said, bluntly.

"Gone?" echoed all, with hopeful surprise.

"Yes, they hev broke camp an' dusted."

"Which way, Jim?" eagerly asked Monkton.

"Toward ther fort ther trail led."

"Did all go, Jim?" again came the eager question.

"I didn't see 'em depart, cap'n, but ther trail all went ther same way, an'—"

A loud cry interrupted Devil Jim, and Denver Dave sunk down in their midst, the

blood spurting from a wound in his forehead.

In horror all eyes were turned in the only direction from whence the shot could have come, and quickly they broke for cover, as they beheld standing, rifle in hand, on a spur far up the mountain, the tall form of Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

POWELL'S FIRST BLOW ON HIS RED TRAIL.

WHEN Frank Powell left the camp, where he had known so much of misery and suspense, after leaving Devil Jim, he took his little drove of horses and began to ascend the mountain.

He knew the country, or rather its general outline, for before he had been through there; but his correct eye for locality and finding his way told him that he could flank the cabin stronghold and gain a position where he could look down upon it.

As straight as though he had gone over the track before, he went to a certain point, where years before he had been prospecting under the guidance of an Indian.

"Now I know just where I am, and I can gain a position that commands a good view of the little plot of land, where the Hyena's cabin now stands," he said, gazing around him and taking in familiar objects.

"I will go to our old camp, and I shouldn't wonder if the cabin still stands, and there is abundant good grass and water there, while no one would come there except to hunt for me."

A ride of a mile further, still ascending, brought him to the spot he sought.

It looked as though at some time it had been a volcano, for it was a bowl in the cone of a mountain, only it was full of vegetation.

On one side was a cabin, small, but a good protection against the weather, and upon the other a cavern.

Large piles of pine knots and wood lay here and there, and it was very evident that the little abode had been occupied for some little time at a date several years before.

Looking around him before he dismounted Frank Powell said:

"I certainly will be comfortable here."

"Why, I do not believe a soul has been here, miner, outlaw or Indian, since I left it, years ago."

"Here, horses, is your paradise, and you shall go free, for by felling yonder tree I can bar the only way you can get out of here."

The tree across a pass between the rocks was soon cut down with a hatchet and made into rails that barred the way, a fire was built in the cabin, to purify it, and in a short while Frank Powell confessed that he felt "at home."

The horses enjoyed their freedom from the length of a stake rope, and the game was abundant upon all sides, so that the Surgeon Scout, under different circumstances, would have felt contented there.

After settling himself, he shouldered his rifle and leaving the cave struck off along the ridge for a point half a mile beyond.

This was a rugged spur fringed with mountain pines, that branched off along the ridge.

After a rough walk of it, Frank Powell reached the spur and halted just in the edge of a clump of stunted trees.

Behind him lay the mountains that formed the range upon which he stood, and to the right and left they ran.

Before him, in the distance, were other ranges of hills.

But at his feet was a huge canyon or valley.

It seemed as though at some time, centuries and centuries before, some mighty river might have glided through the open space.

It was in width from a hundred yards in places, to five hundred at others, and all along its sides were walls of rocks, in fact at times becoming straight up and down cliffs, rising to a great height.

Through the canyon, and upon the side near the spur, rushed a stream of water, the roar of which reached the ears of the surgeon as he stood gazing down upon it.

It was a vicious-looking stream, foaming, hurrying, rushing along, dashing against rocks that here and there barred its way, and threatening death to any human being that attempted to breast its waters.

Upon the opposite side of the canyon was a cavernous opening in the cliff, and, near it, a cabin.

Up the canyon a few hundred yards, and within full view of the observer on the spur, was the cabin stronghold of Captain Kit, the bridge across the torrent being also in full view.

"He has made himself comfortable there, that is certain, and without artillery a hundred soldiers could not drive him out.

"Why, he has a most comfortable cabin, some stockade walls, a stable, and all at hand.

"But we will see if he holds it."

Taking his glass he turned it on the stronghold and said:

"Yes; there is no longer room for doubt, for I see Monkton himself, as I knew him when he played ranchero.

"He and Captain Hyena are one and the same, and therefore the more reason that I should strike him for his treachery.

"Oh! but can Janette have known this?

"No! no! no! I must banish the thought or it will drive me wild.

"And there is Devil Jim; so he has arrived all right, and I see the negro bravo, too.

"Then, there are others. Yes, Kendrick, the deserter courier, and three men whom I do not recognize—yes, I do recognize one, and he is the wretch that twice lay in ambush to kill me.

"Now it is my turn.

"It looks cowardly to kill a man unwarned, but then they strike at all like snakes in the grass, and it is doing honest humanity a service.

"Then, I have sworn to hunt to death those who kidnapped Janette, and I will keep my oath.

"They shall have one satisfaction. I will let them see who fires the shot and if they come here after me, they will find that I will not hide from them.

"Now to see if I can kill a man with this matchless rifle at a much greater distance than I did the antelope on my wager with Major Benteen."

He raised the rifle as he spoke, looked at it carefully, and then muttered:

"It is a very long shot; but if I miss, and I don't think I will, it will show Devil Jim just where I am."

The next instant the rifle was at his shoulder, his eye ran along the barrel, and without seemingly having time to take aim, he touched the trigger.

With the crack of the gun almost, Denver Dave fell, as the reader has already seen, and Monkton and his men knew that the Surgeon Scout had begun his deadly retribution in earnest.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CAVERN TRAIL.

With a grim smile upon his face, Frank Powell stepped out upon the very edge of the precipice, overlooking the canyon, and there stood in plain view of those in the stronghold below.

A man without an iron nerve could never have stood at that fearful height, gazing unmoved down upon the prostrate form of Denver Dave, fallen by his hand.

A moment he stood thus, and then his eye fell upon a hawk, perched in a tree just over Brick's kitchen.

Instantly his rifle was again at his shoulder, the report followed, and the bird fell with a heavy thud upon the roof of the shelter.

All had seen this second exhibition of deadly aim, and had rushed into the cabin, Devil Jim going too, and remarking:

"As bullets is flyin' round this way, I'll jist hunt cover; but who ever seen such shootin'?"

Finding that his aim was fully appreciated, the Surgeon Scout wheeled on his heel and walked back out of sight.

It was growing dark in the valleys below, but the setting sun still gilded the hill-tops, and he walked along rapidly back to the camp, shooting a bird or two for supper on his way.

As he sat pondering in his cabin, after the meal, he said aloud:

"Why need I hesitate longer?

"This suspense is awful, and it must end one way or another at once.

"Jim is there and I will only now have five men to fight, with him to aid me, and the surprise I give them will be half the battle for me to begin with.

"The Indian went through, and where he went I can go, desperate though the undertaking be.

"I have seen the cave just back of the cabin, and there is where the underground way comes out.

"Yes, I will make the attempt at least, and I will start at once."

Having made up his mind to some desperate resolve, Frank Powell arose and went to the pile of pine knots.

From these he chopped splinters, a foot or more in length, and tied half a dozen together in a bundle.

Making a dozen or more of these bundles, he attached them by strings to his belt, and then, with his rifle slung at his back, walked across to the cavern on the other side of the cone, already spoken of.

In his hand he carried a large torch, which he had lighted at the fire, and so boldly stepped into the cave.

A savage growl greeted him, and then came a scratching sound, and quick as a flash his revolver was in his left hand and discharged.

He had but a second to aim, and that was between two fiery balls, as they appeared.

But the aim was deadly, for at his feet fell a large mountain lion.

The bullet had penetrated his brain and killed him instantly.

"That is a bad beginning, and yet a good one, for it might have been worse.

"Now I see what kind of acquaintances I am to make in here, I'll be prepared."

So saying, he stepped over the body of the wild beast, and holding his torch above his head, and slightly behind him, so as not to blind him, he again moved on.

The cavern was not large, but yet sufficiently so to prevent his stooping, and it gave him a few feet space upon either side.

No wild animals he found there, could get by him without a shot or a struggle, glad as he would have been to have them let him alone.

A little further on a large snake hissed in his pathway, but the torch sent him gliding away to seek some secure hiding-place.

Then a coyote went yelping before him, fearing to run by, and yet not worthy of a shot.

A large wolf however was different, for he came rushing along like a race-horse, his white fangs glittering, his eyes glaring.

He was cornered and he meant to fight.

So did Powell, for a shot between the eyes stopped the career of the brute.

Further on a wild-cat humped herself and showed an intention to fly all to pieces with fury, but a bullet ended her life.

Snakes, a few coyotes, that like the reptiles found some place to hide in, and then a huge owl, whose wings knocked the torch out of Frank Powell's hand, extinguishing it, were next encountered.

It was a critical moment, there in the darkness; but with perfect nerve a match was struck against the stone walls of the cave, and the torch relighted.

And not a moment too soon, for the cavern echoed with a savage growl, and a bear appeared in sight.

That bear meant to bar the way, and to do so, raised upon his hind legs.

When he dropped down he had a bullet through his heart.

"Well! Barnum could get a whole menagerie out of here, that is certain.

"Now, what next?" and Frank Powell stepped forward, to suddenly fall.

But it was only a distance of a couple of feet and he was not hurt, though he again extinguished his torch.

Relighting this, he saw that the cavern began a steep descent, and he had to be more careful in his progress.

From that on he met no more wild denizens of the place, and continuing his way, seemed to be going down into the very center of the earth.

He knew that the distance he had to travel was little less than a mile, in a straight line, could one be made from the cone to the outlaw stronghold.

But the cavern had some windings, and with its descent, must be at least half a mile further.

Still it seemed to him that he was going miles and miles.

Fortunately there were but two or three passageways branching off, and these he marked, so as not to lose himself if he came back that way.

The air was damp and foul, and it was certainly a fearful place to be in; but he was determined to go on.

"It is only fancy that makes the way seem so long, and I must not go back now," he muttered.

More than half of his torches were now gone, so he pressed on as rapidly as he dared from the nature of the cavern flooring.

On, on, he went, and it seemed that the way must never end.

On, on, until he began to feel that he had gone wrong, and passed over miles and miles.

Yet he would not go back.

He had but one torch left, yet would go on or die.

Suddenly, after he had begun to feel that he must light his last torch, a wall appeared before him.

No, he touched it, and found that it was not a wall, but a partition of small poles.

"I have found the end," he said, grimly, and laying his torch down, he began, with his knife, to hack his way through.

He worked rapidly, and with strong hand, so that it did not take him long.

Through he went, and then followed the cavern-way some few rods, when another partition barred his progress.

This was not as strong as the other, and he cut it away.

A blanket hung on the other side of it, and this he tore away.

Then he found himself in a little rock chamber.

Blankets covered the walls, and served as a carpet.

A small cot was there, a rude chair and a table, and upon the latter stood a silver candlestick and candle.

The latter he hastily lighted.

Then his foot struck against something that rattled.

It was a chain, and upon one end was a handcuff, while the other was made fast with a padlock, around a huge boulder.

"Hal! this is a prison pen, so I know that the Hyena is not far away.

"Great God! can he have had poor Janette a prisoner here, and that be the reason why Jim could not find her?

"Good God! where is she now, for I feel that this has been her prison, and it has been recently occupied," and as the great beads of sweat broke out upon his brow, he sunk down in the chair, for a moment completely unnerved.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TOO LATE.

For awhile Frank Powell sat by the little table, the candle-light falling full upon him, for he had extinguished his torch now.

He was very pale and stern, and his lips were set with firm resolve.

At length he arose, loosened his revolvers in their holsters, and still leaving his rifle at his back, took up the candle and moved on through the cavern.

A few steps brought him to where it widened, and putting the candle down, he walked forward in the darkness.

Soon it grew lighter, and he knew that the end was reached.

Then he drew with each hand a revolver, and walked forward with a tread as silent as an Indian's.

A few paces, and he stood in the entrance, or exit of the cavern.

It was an opening in the side of a cliff, some fifteen feet above the ground.

But a pole-ladder led up to it from below.

Before him in the darkness he saw distinctly, for it was starlight, the large cabin of the outlaws, with the stable to one side, back against the mountain wall.

A fire still glimmered over in the kitchen, but all was silent.

Powell knew that it was after midnight, and that in that place there was no need of a guard.

But the deep silence that rested upon all around seemed to alarm him.

He had found the haunt of the outlaws, his arch enemies.

There were five foes there, and one whom he could rely upon as a friend.

These were not such terrible odds, he thought, where he was concerned, that had often faced greater and with victory on his side.

Down the ladder he went, his face toward the cabin, for he would not turn his back.

At the bottom he stood and looked around him.

Then he glided over to the kitchen.

The fire still burned, but the place was vacant.

As he turned he saw a dark object lying upon the ground in a heap.

At first he thought it was a huge dog, and his revolver covered it.

Then he drew nearer and bent over it.

"It is the man I killed," he said, coolly.

Then he walked straight to the cabin door and boldly knocked, after which he stepped one side and stood, his revolvers cocked and ready.

But no answer came.

Again he knocked, and loudly.

Still no answer from within.

"Good God! it is as I expected," he cried, and then he threw his weight against the door.

It would not yield to even his great strength.

Looking around he found a large log, and this he raised and hurled against the door.

It went in with a crash, and into the cabin he bounded.

But all was silent, no one was there.

From room to room he went, but to find no one, and then he sat down and fairly moaned:

"Gone! gone! gone!"

A long time he sat thus, and then he arose and went to the stable.

It was vacant; but a walk down to the bridge showed him that the spans were up.

"As no man or horse can swim yonder torrent, *some one* must be on this side.

"I will wait until morning and see, for nothing more can be done to-night."

Then to and fro he paced, his head bent down in deep and painful thought.

To and fro, until the hours passed away and the dawn sent its gray light into the canyon, and the rising sun gilded the mountain-tops, Frank Powell continued his lonely pace.

Then, as the light came, he glanced around him.

"Fool that I was! why did I not go after my horses?" he said, as he felt that he was a foot far from the camp he had left.

Quickly he walked down to the bridge, and lowering it, crossed over.

The trail of half a score of horses led from there down the canyon, and among the rocks was the well known one of Devil Jim's steed.

"If I only had my horses here, I could push on in pursuit," he muttered.

Then he looked about him searchingly, for he said:

"There must be some way for a man to get over, if the bridge is up, or some one is left here all the time to lower them.

"I will see if I can find out the secret, and then go after the horses and bring them here.

"If a man is left in charge, I shall find him, or if there is a way of crossing the river, I shall discover it."

With this he set to work to first look for a human being.

But every nook and corner, every crevice of the rocks, was searched in vain.

The cabin had not been materially disturbed, but was left with its furniture, such as it was.

Then the surgeon began to search for the manner of getting over the river, other than by the bridge, for the one who had raised the spans again had certainly gone across afterward in some way.

Every inch of the shore was searched, and just at the end, under the cliff, he came upon a wire rope, fastened around the root of a tree, and the other end was in the water.

Just at that point there was a whirlpool, and from it the current rushed in an oblique direction for the other shore.

Gazing upon that shore under shelter of a rock, the Surgeon Scout detected a dark object which he determined to have a better look at.

Going back to the bridge, he lowered it, crossed over and went down to the point of rocks, hidden away in which he had seen the object that had attracted his attention from the other side.

He could not get over the steep face of the rock, except in one way, and that was by a rope.

Returning to the cabin he got an old lariat, and tying one end to a tree, lowered himself over and swung under to the cavernous spot he sought.

There before his eyes he discovered just what he had expected to find—a boat.

It was a light built affair, ingeniously made, and about ten feet long.

He could lift it easily, and he could see that the wire rope was fastened to a ring in its bow, and there the secret was solved.

The boat showed that it had not long been out of the water, and this told how the man, who had raised the bridge-spans, after the others had crossed, had gotten over himself.

Leaving the boat undisturbed, Frank Powell went up the stream to the bridge, recrossed, raised the spans, and then very coolly set to work cooking his breakfast out of the food found there.

This done, he took several candles he found in the cabin, and retraced his way through the cavern to his camp, the distance seeming far less on his return.

Mounting his horse and leading the others, he started upon his return to the outlaws' retreat around the mountain.

But it was late in the afternoon before he rode up and halted opposite to the bridge.

Hitching his horses, he went down the stream, launched the boat, and drawing hand over hand over the wire rope, which slipped through the ring in the bow, he passed in safety over the surging waters and reached the other shore.

There, behind a bowlder, was a snug hiding-place for the boat, and leaving it there, he went up to the bridge, lowered the spans, and soon had his horses in safety in the stronghold.

"It is too late to-night to start, but to-morrow I strike the trail of Captain Hyena," he said, in grim tones, that showed he meant what he said.

The following morning Frank Powell arose and began his preparations for departure.

He selected the two best horses of the lot, and arranged the stores, extra blankets and what else he needed to carry in the little pack-saddle.

Then he cooked his breakfast and was just about to start, when his eyes fell upon a horseman coming up the canyon.

One glance was sufficient to show him that it was Dead Knife Jim.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE CAVERN PRISON.

THE shot fired by Powell from the distant cliff had a more demoralizing effect upon the outlaws than could have been imagined.

Any large force coming up the canyon to attack them would not have alarmed them nearly as much.

In fact it unnerved them.

They looked upon the Surgeon Scout as the slayer of Moseley, as a matter of course, and when he boldly showed himself upon the cliff, nearly half a mile distant, and dropped a man in their midst, it was terrible.

They expected danger from him under cover of the darkness, but not in the sunlight.

Had they seen him standing there before he fired, they would have laughed at him, not believing his rifle could throw a bullet to them.

But knowing that he carried a weapon that was deadly at that distance, then they were alarmed indeed.

Monkton saw that his men were demoralized, and he had a talk with his intimate friend, Kendrick.

That worthy he also found to be demoralized, for he said:

"Paul, it might have been me, or you, just as well."

"You, perhaps, but not me."

"Why not you?"

"Now I think of it, hardly you either."

"I do not get at your meaning."

"Well, he wants to see me hanged, and you, too, so he would not kill us if he could take us alive."

"I see," said Kendrick, with a shudder.

"He shot Devil Jim, and, as he believed, killed him, or he would never have ridden off and left him lying there."

"Then he killed Moseley, and I believe that he was in a fight for life, for Powell, to do him justice, is not one to kill from the pleasure of taking life."

"Next he killed Denver Dave, and he was the man he aimed at, for I know that Dave has ambushed him and been his bitter foe all through."

"Jim was with us, you and I, and he spared the former because he had had a chance at him, and you and I for hanging."

"As for Jack and Bonanza Bill, they will be the next, mark my words, and—"

"My God, Monkton! do you expect to remain here?" cried Kendrick.

"What do the men say?"

"They wish to get away, and come back after Powell has given up the chase."

"And what do you think, Kirk?"

"Oh, I wish to go, too, but I will stick by you."

"Yes, it would be best; but let me call Brick and see if he is getting demoralized, too."

"Brick!"

"Yas, massa," and the negro came into the cabin.

"What do you think of the Surgeon Scout's shot?"

"It am mighty bad, sah, an' it c'u'dn't ha' been wuss onless it were me he slewed."

"Aha! so you think, and Mr. Kendrick here and myself argue from the same standpoint that you do, only placing ourselves in your place."

"But how would you like to go on a scout after him?"

"Massa, I don't want ter go."

"You have your charm, you know."

"Yas, sah, so I hab; but it hain't gwine ter do no good whar dat Debble Doctor am consarned, sah."

"No, sah, he w'u'd slew me, sart'in sure."

"And do you think we had better remain here?"

"No, sah, I does not, for dis place hain't safe no longer."

"Then you too wish to go?"

"I does, sah, sart'in as Scriptur'."

"Well, as soon as it is dark, make all arrangements to depart."

"We will leave things as they are in the cabin, and take just what we need."

"Yas, sah; but how 'bout de—de—"

"I understand you, Brick, and I will attend to that affair."

"Now, Kirk, see the men, and tell them that we leave here within a couple of hours, and to be ready."

"It will be good news for them; but where are you going?"

"Oh, we will find a place where Frank Powell cannot find us, and if he could, brave as he is, he would not dare follow."

So saying, Monkton left the cabin, went to the rear cliff, and ascended the ladder, already spoken of, to the mouth of the cave.

Here he found matches and a candle, and lighting the latter, walked back into the cavern.

Some sixty feet from the entrance he came upon the little room which Frank Powell had discovered in coming through the tunnel, and he placed the candle upon the table.

But the room held an occupant now, and she lay upon the little cot, her eyes fixed upon the man before her.

The occupant of that cavernous chamber, I need hardly say, was Janette, the stolen bride.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FLIGHT.

THE few days that Janette had been in that cavern prison had made a change in her that was marked.

She was white-faced, haggard, and her lips had a look of sternness that marred their beauty.

When taken there by the negro, at the time she fainted, and recovered consciousness to find herself ironed, for a handcuff

was about her wrist, and she was chained to a stone.

The man she deemed her husband stood by her side and said:

"Janie, you acted so strangely I had you brought here and confined.

"But it rests with you to at once become free and be my happy wife.

"I have been a great sinner, I have committed crimes; but I love you, and henceforth will live for your happiness.

"Be reasonable, Janette, and let the past be forgotten, and let us live for happiness in the future."

Springing to her feet she said, while her eyes flashed fire:

"Vile fiend that you are, murderer of my father, I would rather stay here, dying by inches, and loaded with irons, than to go free at your word.

"Leave me, now that you have wrecked my life.

"Kill me by inches, if you will, but never come here again to torment me by your presence."

He laughed rudely and left her, and though Brick had taken her meals to her regularly, and did all he could to make them tempting, she had not spoken once to him, nor had she seen again his master.

She ate what was placed before her, for her inmost nature was roused to seek revenge against the man who had so wronged her, and she did not wish to lose her strength.

Then suddenly, after days of absence, the chief had appeared before her.

She saw him approach, but did not rise.

Setting the candle on the table he said:

"Janette, we have to leave here."

"Well, go!" she said, sharply.

"But, Janette, you must accompany me."

"I am powerless to resist," she answered, glad of a chance to get away, hoping that an opportunity of escape would open for her.

"If you pledge yourself to go willingly, and to obey my instructions, I will allow you to go free as I am; but if you intend to make me trouble, then you shall go in irons, or be bound to your horse by day, and be ironed by night."

"I have no love for being in chains, so will promise."

"Very well, then; we start within an hour, and your horse will be ready for you.

"I have deceived the men in regard to you, but I shall offer no explanations to them."

With this he turned away and left the cavern; but an hour after he returned to her, took off her chains, and she followed him down the ladder, and mounted the horse that stood awaiting her.

Springing into his saddle, Monkton placed himself by her side, and the two rode down toward the bridge, where the men were waiting.

They looked with amazement at her, but wisely held their peace, though their thoughts were busy, and especially was this the case with Devil Jim.

"Jack, you remain and pull the bridges up and then follow us, said Monkton.

"All right, cap'n," was the answer, and all but Jack rode across.

They saw him draw the island-span up, and then the darkness hid him from view.

But Brick hitched his horse to a tree, and then all rode on slowly.

In half an hour there was heard the clatter of hoofs behind them, and Jack came up.

"All right, Jack?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"How in thunder did yer git across?" asked Bonanza Bill.

"Jumped over, pard," answered Jack.

"Yer didn't swim over, thet are sart'in, fer yer is dry as a toper in thet mornin' airly," remarked Devil Jim.

"The way he got across is a secret which he only knows, and will keep," said Monkton, putting an end to the guessing, and riding on in advance, with Janette close by his side.

After leaving the canyon, Monkton turned to the left, and after riding a few miles he called Devil Jim alongside.

"Jim, are you acquainted down the valley we are going?"

"Never was there in my life, cap'n."

"I intended to go to a part of the country which I once passed through, and know little about, other than that there are new

mines opening up there, and those who are staking claims, are as wild a lot of human beings as ever congregated together.

"I bought a claim there from one of my men, and I intended to go and work it, with the hope that it will pan out well, or at least keep the pot boiling until we can return to the one we have just left."

"And thet will be as soon as thet Doctor hev give up yer trail," said Devil Jim, anxious to give Janette a hint that the Surgeon Scout was then looking for her.

He noticed her start and glance toward him; but her act escaped the eyes of Monkton, and he answered:

"Yes, as soon as Powell learns that I intend to have my own way in spite of him and work into the hands of Captain Kit, we will return to the home we have just left.

"Waal, cap'n, he are a bad one on a trail, I tell yer, an' yer hain't goin' far wrong in gittin' clean out o' his way, fer it are my opinion thet he an' his brother pards, hev formed a death league ter hunt down Cap'n Kit, an' as you is actin' fer thet Red Angil Chief, then he'll hunt yer too."

"You don't mean to say that he will follow us away from the canyon?"

"I does."

Monkton remained silent for some time, and then said:

"Devil Jim!"

"Sir ter you."

"I wish you would do me a favor."

"Sart'in."

"Go back on the trail and find out just what Powell is about.

"I will cover up our tracks, you may rest assured, so that no living man can trail us, but I will leave signs for you to follow us by.

"If you get a chance to ambush Frank Powell and kill him, I will give you five thousand dollars for his scalp."

"Thankee, cap'n, I'm thet man ter make thet money ef it can be did."

"Well, I'll give it to you the moment you bring me Powell's scalp, and half as much for the scalp of each one of his brothers."

"Thankee ag'in; but c'u'd yer give me a leetle dust ter take back with it, fer I hev a idee I kin buy up a few o' them Gold Buzzards ter help me, an' they is terrors."

"Bravo for you, Devil Jim! a splendid idea, and you shall have a couple of thousand now as a bonus.

"Brick carries the metal, so I will get it for you."

He dropped back as he spoke, saying, in a whisper:

"Keep this woman right by your side."

"Yas, cap'n."

As soon as Monkton had dropped back to get the money from Brick, Devil Jim said in a low tone:

"Don't you give up hope, 'lady for I am Surgeon Powell's friend and yours."

"Can this be true?" answered Janette, in the same low tone.

"True, as Scriptur', as you kin sw'ar," returned Devil Jim, resuming his dialect once more.

"Tell him, tell Surgeon Powell not to risk his life in seeking me, for I am lost to him forever.

"Tell him this from me, and bid him go back to the fort and forget that he ever met me."

Janette's voice quivered as she spoke, and the quick ear of Devil Jim catching the sound of some one close behind him, he said aloud:

"No, gal, thet cap'n told me ter stick to yer, an' I'd kill yer dead afore I'd let yer git away."

"Good for you, Devil Jim," cried Monkton, riding up and joining them, and he added:

"I heard your voice, madam, but could not catch your words, and now find out that you were begging him to allow you to escape.

"We'll see to that."

"Here, Jim, here is your money, and I made it three thousand, for you to buy aid among the Gold Buzzards.

"I will leave you a trace, a notched stick stuck up at every place where you are liable to be at fault.

"Now luck to you, and I expect good news from you in a few days."

"All right, cap'n, an' good-night ter yer."

With this Devil Jim turned and started on the back trail; but he had not gone very far before he coolly went into camp for the night, having evidently decided in his own mind upon some deed of daring for the morrow.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ONE-ARMED PARD AMAZED.

FRANK POWELL, upon seeing Devil Jim coming up the canyon, was not at all surprised, for he had now implicit faith in the man with whom he had formed a death league, and he had expected to meet him upon the trail.

But Devil Jim was certainly amazed at beholding Powell.

He had intended to go back up the canyon and see if he could not catch sight of the Surgeon Scout upon the mountains back of the stronghold, ready to fire another shot into the enemy's camp.

This, he knew, would save him a long ride around to the new camp.

If he saw him on the hills he could signal to him that the enemy had deserted.

But now he discovered the Surgeon Scout coolly seated upon the little bench before the cabin, smoking a cigar, while near him were two horses ready for the road, and others running at large on the space that comprised the retreat, and where they would find ample grass and water to do them for a long time.

"Thunder an' billy-goats!"

"I does believe thet Doctor are a Wizard, as they calls him.

"Ef he hain't, then how in all durnation did he git on thet place?"

"The bridge are up, an' yet thar he is, lookin' as comfortable as kin be.

"Now thet beats me; but guessin' hain't goin' ter tell me about it, an' ef I stands here lookin', I hain't goin' ter git thar.

"He must hev dropped over thet cliff, hosses an' all; but I'll soon know."

With this he rode down to the stream, just as Powell lowered the island span for him.

"Well, Jim, I am glad to see you," said the surgeon, as Devil Jim rode across.

"An' I am glad ter see you, Pard Doc," and the outlaw looked at him as though he was suspicious of his possessing powers of an unnatural order.

"I was just about to start on your trail, and expected to find you somewhere on the road."

"Yas, but I finds you here.

"Pretty snug leetle place, Doc?"

"Yes, as a safe retreat it is wonderful."

"Thar is them as didn't think so, with rifles thet shoots like cannons."

"You refer to my shot yesterday; it was a long one."

"It were indeed, an' it got game, too.

"Whar is it?"

"My rifle?"

"No, yer game."

"I buried the body over there under the cliff."

"Ther river w'u'd hev saved yer trouble."

"Yes, but I preferred to give him decent burial."

"You is allus white, Doc; but hes yer been here long?"

"I arrived here first night before last, Jim."

"Yer give a crow, flopped yer wings, an' jist flew down, I reckon."

"No, Jim; I walked."

"No!"

"Yes, I walked here the first time, and rode the second."

Jim looked bewildered, and again asked:

"Doc, thar hain't nothin' wrong about yer, is thar?"

"How do you mean?"

"You hain't no wizard, be yer?"

Frank Powell laughed, and then replied:

"Jim, have you forgotten that I told you there was a way to get here, which an Indian once showed me?"

"I does recommemder now, Doc."

"Well, I came that way."

"Aha."

"Do you see yonder bunch of bushes growing on the cliff-side?"

"Yas, I sees 'em."

"Behind them is a cavern, and there is a ladder that leads up to it, but which was not against the cliff when you were here, but somewhere else."

"It were leanin' ag'in' the house."

"Well, that ladder led to a cave, which

runs through the mountain up to the camp I moved to when I last left you.

"I followed the tunnel, and it brought me out into a small room in this end of it, which you shall see."

"Oho! I sees now suthin' strange, and that are where ther leddy were all ther time."

"Yes, Jim, she was a prisoner in that cavern chamber, and I reached it hardly an hour after you all left, I judge."

"What a pity yer hedn't been sooner, fer then yer c'u'd hev got ther leddy out an' axed Cap'n Kit no questions!"

"Yes, Jim, if I had only acted sooner, but I did not," sadly said Powell.

"But, Doc, yer didn't bring ther critters that way?"

"No, I went around with them."

"But how did yer get over?"

"I found the secret, which I will show you; but now tell me what you have done?"

"Waal, ther gang deserted, t'other night, an' in course I deserted ther place with 'em."

"Certainly."

"Your shootin' Denver Dave—"

"Ah! it was the right one, then?"

"Yas, but as fer thet, all of ther gang was ther right one, includin' myself."

"I thought I recognized the man as one who had tried very hard to kill me."

"Fact, Doc, an' Bonanza Bill are another."

"Yes, I have my eyes on him too; but there is one of the party I do not know or at least do not remember to have seen before."

"That are Jack, an' he an' ther one I kilt were ther ones Cap'n Kit has hed here in charge of the mine an' ther cabin."

"Ah yes, then I have no quarrel with him, other than should he attempt to defend the Hyena when I meet him."

"He'll do it; fer he is stuck on likin' ther cap'n."

"Well, now go on and tell me about your leaving."

"Yer see, they all got durned narvous, arter Denver Dave got knocked over, an' a consultation were held, an' it were decided ter git out; an' ter lose no time in gittin'."

"So we gits ready and starts early thet night."

"But, jist as we were ready, up rides Cap'n Hyena, with ther leddy by his side."

"Whar he had found her war a puzzle ter us all, savin' ther nigger, and ther cap'n didn't say a word about it, not even excoosin' her presence or interducin' us, as w'u'd hev been proper."

"So off we goes, an' pushes on pretty lively, too."

"I was a-thinkin' about gittin' some excoose ter drap back, when he calls me alongside o' him, whar he were ridin' with ther leddy, an' tells me he wished me ter do him a sarvice."

"In course I told him I w'u'd, an' then he tells me ter drap back an' see jist what you was up ter, an' ef yer showed intentions o' follerin' him, ter push on an' let him know."

"He told me he'd leave me signs an' sich; but ef I'd jist ambush you, an' take yer scalp, he'd give me five thousand dollars."

"Indeed! he sets a high value upon my scalp."

"He wants yer brothers', the Night Hawk's an' Broncho Bill's, at half price, he said."

"Of course you agreed to get them?"

"In course I did, an' he told me ter do it."

"Then I said as how I hed a idee thet I would git ther Gold Buzzards ter help me, an' wanted a leetle spar' change ter pay 'em with."

"Thet struck him whar he lived, an' he jist told me ter watch ther gal, while he got ther dust from his cashier, ther nigger."

"As he drap back, I jist said to ther leddy as how she must hev hope, fer I war her friend an' your pard, an' we was a-comin' ef a leetle slow."

"I did want ter tell her thet we hed started a pardnership thet were a Death League, an' we jist was goin' ter hump along on Cap'n Kit's trail ef it led us ter—no, I didn't say whar, Doc, but I w'u'd hev liked ter, that she might not think we'd git scared off ef it got hot or cold."

"But you told her that we were determined to rescue her?"

"Yas, about thet."

"God bless you, Jim."

"Doc, I hes faith in yer, I confesses, but I hain't no faith that even your pra'er will git ther Lord's blessin' on me."

"Ah, Jim, you have a big heart, if you have gone wrong in life; but what else did you say to Janette?"

"Mighty leetle, only she said as how she wanted me ter tell you not ter risk your life fer her, but ter go back an' fergit her, fer she war lost ter you ferever."

"Great God! were those her words?"

"As nigh as I kin recommember, Pard Doc."

Frank Powell seemed to be hard hit, and the old ashen hue came back to his face, which Devil Jim had seen there before when he was deeply moved.

He saw more in Janette's words than did his one-armed ally.

After a moment he grew calm, and then said:

"Well, Jim, what else?"

"Why, I seen thet imp o' perdition, Cap'n Kit, a-ridin' up close abind us, an' so I sings out to her su'thin' about her not escapin' while she were in my charge, an' she know'd ther rackit I was givin' ther Hyena, an' kept quiet; but she hev hope, I knows, thet you kin, an' intends ter rescue her."

"I can avenge her, Jim, if I do not rescue her, and I shall never drop the trail until I have killed that man."

"It are a Death League atween us, Pard Doc, an' when you picks up ther end o' ther trail, I will be thar, an' don't fergit it, onless my toes is turned up to ther starlight."

"Bless you, Jim, and I will never forget you; but how shall we take their trail and follow it?"

"Pard, we kin do it, but I hev a leetle su'thin' on my mind ter tell you."

"Well, out with it, Jim!"

"I'll do it, Doc," and Frank Powell heard from the lips of his one-arm pard what is made known to the reader in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XL.

UNDER COVER OF A REVOLVER-MUZZLE.

It was the custom of Devil Jim to always sleep as did the great Napoleon, that is, with one eye open.

His life, for long years, had been so full of peril, that he had become always on the alert when in camp with his comrades.

But, after leaving Captain Kit and his party, and starting on the back trail, it will be remembered that Devil Jim went into camp for the balance of the night.

He did not care to build a fire, and was not particularly hungry, a rare occurrence for him, so he quietly folded one blanket about him, threw another down for a mattress, and with his saddle for a pillow sunk to sleep.

It was only an hour or so to daylight, and he wished to get what rest he could, intending to start early to return to Surgeon Powell, whom he expected to find in the camp on the mountain.

But when Jim went back on the trail there was a horseman who saw him coming.

That horseman was riding up the trail, and to avoid being seen, quietly drew into the thicket on one side.

As he had been in the shadow of the trees, and Devil Jim in an opening, the stranger had seen him at quite a distance off, so was safely hidden in the thicket when the outlaw came along.

It seemed to have been the intention of the stranger either to halt Devil Jim or to fire upon him, for his revolver was in his hand.

But seeing the outlaw turn off from the trail and halt in the thicket he remained quiet.

Jim, little dreaming that an enemy was within a few feet of him, went to his lonely bed, as the reader has seen, and neither the stranger nor his horse moved a muscle to betray their presence.

After Jim was asleep the stranger quietly slipped from his saddle, and then throw a blanket over the head of his horse.

This caused the animal to stand as still as a stone, and prevented him from betraying to Jim how near foes were to him.

Then the horseman, with a step that seemed to be of velvet, walked toward the sleeping outlaws.

Getting within a yard of him he crouched upon the ground and remained quiet.

Once or twice Devil Jim's horse moved about, and half-wakened his master, but, as

though understanding the noise, he went on with his sleep, not observing the man so near him.

Thus the minutes passed away until a half-hour had gone by.

Still that strange man crouched near the sleeper.

Then an hour went by, and yet he did not move.

A quarter of an hour more, and the eastern skies began to grow gray with coming dawn.

Next the cold, bluish light of early morn stole over the scene, to become tinted with the reflection in the east, where the god of day was preparing to launch forth in splendor, for his run across the heavens.

Then Devil Jim moved, a trifle uneasily, and then opened his eyes.

"Good-morning, pard."

Such was the greeting of the stranger, and he looked straight into the eyes of the outlaw, while upon his face was a pleasant smile.

Jim was caught, and he could not deny it. He made no effort to seize his revolver, or to spring to his feet.

He saw a cocked revolver leveled at him, the muzzle within two feet of his head, and the man who held it coolly seated upon the ground and smiling after his pleasant:

"Good-morning, pard."

Devil Jim was a stoic and a philosopher.

He was never, or very seldom, made to show surprise, so, with all the coolness in the world, he answered:

"It are a good-mornin', hain't it?"

CHAPTER XLI.

A STRANGE COMPACT.

REPEATING the words of Devil Jim, his captor said:

"Yes, it is good-morning, and the sun is just rising above the hills over yonder."

"Thet may be, but *this son* sittin' here interests me more jist now."

"You refer to myself?"

"Sart'in, fer I don't see any more of the fam'ly round."

"No, I am all alone, pard."

"I'm durned ef I don't wish I were, too."

"You don't find my presence agreeable, then?"

"Not a durned bit, an' I are cur'us ter know how yer got thar without rousin' me."

"I was here when you came."

"I see, an' jist laid low, seen me make my twilight, git inter my leetle bed, tuck myself in warm, an' then hearkened unto me snore."

"Just so, all but the snore, for you sleep as quietly as the dead."

"Yas, snorin' is bad, fer I ons't found a Injun by his snorin', an' so I kilt him, an' I hes known men ter be diskivered by usin' the'r noses fer a fog-horn when they is sleepin'."

"Now what are ter be did with me now yer has me?"

"What is yer name?"

"Devil Jim or Dead Knife Jim, jist suit yerself."

"I have heard of you."

"Yas, likely."

"You belong to the band of Red Angels, under Captain Kit?"

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"Waal ef it pleases yer to say so, I don't keer."

"Some of the band are now in this locality."

"Is they?"

"Yes, they are working a mine up in the Red Canyon."

"You know all about it."

"I do, and more, I know that they have a captive."

"Be they?"

"They have, and there is one who is looking for that captive, and who is here to rescue her."

"You seem posted."

"I am, as I will show you."

"I'm a-listenin'."

"There is another too that I know is playing a double game."

"Who are it?"

"Yas?"

"Me?"

"You."

"What is yer givin' me, pard?"

"The truth."

"No wonder it don't set well, fer I am not ust ter takin' it in."

"You must hear it now, however, for I wish to again tell you that you are playing a double game."

"What are ther game, pard?"

"You are either friendly to the Wizard Doctor, or you are treacherous to him."

"Which is it?"

"It is none o' yer durned business."

"I have made it my business to see, and I have discovered that you are friendly with him; and also friendly with Captain Kit's gang."

"Now which are you playing false to?"

"Which does yer think?"

"I confess I do not know, but I hope you are true to one."

"Which one is you struck on?"

"The surgeon."

"Ah! does yer know him?"

"Yes."

"Are you friends?"

"No, for he would kill me at first sight, doubtless."

"Yet you likes him?"

"I do."

"Waal, who is you, anyway?"

"Have you ever heard of the Gold Buzzards of Colorado?"

"Now haven't I heerd o' them wicked ger-loots?"

"Do you consider them as wicked as the Red Angels of the Nebraska Overland Trail?"

"Sart'in, ef they are not wickeder."

"Well, I am the chief of the Gold Buzzards."

"Aha! I see."

"You see what?"

"I see now ther hole where ther rat went in."

"Explain yourself, please."

"You met the Doctor, one day?"

"I did."

"He told me, and now I ketches on ter ther description he give of you."

"Did he feel enmity toward me?"

"He said you was a squar' feller."

"Indeed! and I consider him one of the whitest men I ever met."

"He is all of thet, and more."

"I am glad to hear you speak so of him."

"Oh, I knows Frank Powell, I does, an' he are every bit clean squar', an' ther bravest man I ever seen in shoe-leather."

"Does yer see thet arm?"

"I see the place where there was once an arm."

"Yas; waal, he broke thet arm with a bullet when he c'u'd jist as well kilt me, an' I deserv'd it, fer I were creepin' up abind him ter knife him."

"But he hain't on ther kill, ef he kin git along without it."

"Waal, arter he hed shooted me, he cut my arm off an' nursed me same as ef I were his brother, an' he hev saved my neck from a rope-cratvat more than onc't."

"Oh, yes, I knows him, an' his brothers, too, an' ef ther three of 'em hain't ther best team ever hitched tergether, then yer kin set me down as a beamin' liar out o' ther howlin' wilderness o' despair."

Devil Jim had spoken with remarkable enthusiasm for him, and the man he addressed, and who still kept him "covered," smiled, as he replied:

"Well, I guess there is no reason to ask you further which side you are playing false to, for I see that you are a friend to the Wizard Doctor."

"I are, an' no mistake, pard."

"Then give me your hand, for I am his friend, too," and the self-acknowledged captain of the Gold Buzzards returned his revolver to his belt and held out his hand, which Devil Jim grasped, while he said in his quaint way:

"Waal, ef this don't beat me, I are mistook, pard."

"Now, pard, yer hes some reason fer all this, so what hes yer ter shout?" said Devil Jim, as he arose from his blankets, considerably relieved to find that he was no longer a prisoner, for to do him justice, his first thought was what would the Surgeon Scout think of him, if he was not able to again post him as to the movements of Captain Kit?

"Well, Devil Jim, I wish to say just this:

"I run this part of the country, and my

men are pretty well posted through it, and you have had spies on your movements."

"No."

"It is a fact."

"I hain't seen 'em."

"For all that they have seen you."

"Lordy, I don't like this country, and wants ter git back ter ther perarers, whar a man kin be saw an' gut ready fur a long way off."

"Well, my men have been spies upon your movements, and have seen you go back and forth between the surgeon's camp and Captain Kit's, and be welcome in both."

"Did they see ther Doctor's camp?" asked Jim, wondering if they had seen and recognized the two horses he had stolen from the cabin on the mountain, and the other two that had belonged to the pair of Gold Buzzards which he had shot that day in camp.

"They knew where he was encamped, but had my orders not to go near it, or disturb him; but they saw you circulating between the two, and I was anxious to see how you were playing your cards, and if against the Doctor I intended to come down on you suddenly."

"I knew that Doctor Powell was in pursuit of a lady whom Captain Kit had kidnapped, and I wanted to see him rescue her, though I considered it a reckless thing for him to come alone on such an undertaking."

"Oh, he's as good as half a dozen any day."

"Why did his brothers not come with him?"

"They started, but when they struck ther camp o' Captain Kit, an' tackled ther boys, they got wounded."

"Then the Doc tuk 'em back to ther fort an' come on alone, savin' that I are his pard."

"And he expects to rescue this lady from Kit?"

"He do."

"I fear he will have a disappointment."

"Not much, fer he hes set out ter carry ther leetle job through, an' I are sided with him in ther Death League, an' don't you fer-git it, Cap'n Buzzard."

"He is a wonderful man, I admit; but so is Captain Kit, and it will be diamond cut diamond between them."

"You are mistook, it will be Doc cut Kit, as you will see."

"Who is the lady?"

"She is Doc Powell's wife."

"What?"

"Fact."

"And that devil, Captain Kit, has kidnapped her?"

"He run off with her an hour arter Doc war married to her."

"The villain!"

"He are all thet an' wuss; but what is you goin' ter do about it?"

"Captain Kit trusts you, does he not?"

"He do an' he don't."

"How do you mean?"

"Waal, he trusts me ef he hes ter, an' ef he don't he doubts me."

"I see; but he thinks you are now acting in his interests?"

"Yas, but he'd suspicion me ef I got a chance ter act in my own."

"You are a shrewd fellow, Devil Jim."

"No soft soap, pard, fer it don't wash me."

The Gold Buzzard captain smiled and continued:

"Now you have doubtless come back on the trail to see if Powell was following Kit, for I saw you pass with the party?"

"Thet are what I comed back fer, pard."

"Well, we can easily find out if Captain Kit suspects you."

"As how?"

"Follow on his trail and see if he has left it marked for you."

"I see."

"If he has not, you may be certain that he doubted you and concluded to drop you in that way."

"Fact."

"Well, we will have something to eat, and then push on far enough to see if he has marked his trail for you to follow."

After breakfast the two mounted their horses and rode on their way together.

The trail was readily followed for miles, and then lost at a brook, where a number of other trails were visible, verging to and from the ford.

Here an evident attempt had been made to cover the trail, and the two searched a long while without discovering any trace of the hoof-tracks left by Captain Kit and his party.

At last Devil Dick's sharp eyes fell upon a stick stuck up in the brook, a few yards up the stream.

Quickly he rode to it and pulled it up.

It was a notched stake, newly cut, and Dick said:

"I hes ther sign, pard; they went up ther watercourse."

And up the stream they followed, but not going in the water as had the others.

A mile above they came upon where there was another ford, and here the outlaws had left the stream, and their tracks were plainly followed, while another notched stick was there.

"He trusts you, Dick."

"So it seems, cap'n, fer he hes left ther signs fer me ter foller, so now I'll go back an' see ther Doc."

"You cannot reach the camp before night, so go with me to my cabin, stay to-night, and to-morrow go on, and carry my message to the Doctor."

"I hain't fond o' goin' inter lions' dens, cap'n, fer I hain't no Sampson yer reads about in Scriptur'."

"If I meant you harm, would I have let up on you at your camp this morning?"

"Thet are so."

"I mean you no harm, but I wish, through you, to serve Surgeon Powell."

"Waal, lead on, fer I goes with yer, ef I loses my grip on life."

The Gold Buzzard captain now led the way, and after several hours' ride arrived, by a trail different from the one which Devil Jim had taken, at the cabin on the mountain.

Jim made no confession of his previous visit there, and was ushered into the cabin, in which sat half a score of rough-looking men.

The room was thick with tobacco-smoke, and the men were gambling in parties of two and four.

At sight of their captain they all arose and saluted him politely, while they gazed on Devil Jim with curiosity, which caused him to say bluntly:

"Oh, yer kin look ef yer likes ter, fer I charges no price fer it; but I hain't a durned bit better nor any durned thief among yer."

"Men, this is my friend Devil Jim, or Dead Knife Jim, of whom you have all heard, and he is here to-night as our guest, so make it pleasant for him, as I vouch for him."

"Making it pleasant for him," Devil Jim found was in placing plenty to eat and drink before him, and offering him the best the cabin afforded.

He was given a bunk to sleep in, his horse was cared for by some member of the band, and, out of deference to their captain and guest, the men ceased their gambling and went to bed.

At dawn Jim awoke and found the captain dressing.

"Well, Jim, the boys will have breakfast for you, and then I wish to make a compact with you."

"Waal, cap'n?"

"I wish to agree with you to help Surgeon Powell rescue his wife."

"Done!"

"Tell him from me that I will hold myself and ten men ready to go with him at once on the trail of Captain Kit."

"Thet are prime music yer is swingin' now, an' ther tune will please ther Doc."

"I hope that he will accept my service, and we will soon run this Captain Kit to earth, and end his days."

"I hopes so, cap'n, fer I does wish ter see ther Doc git back his leetle wife, an' git even with Cap'n Kit."

"I tell yer I'm as bad as they make 'em, but when Cap'n Hyena, as Doc calls him, ran off with ther purty girl, then I tar'd ag'in' him fer good, fer I know'd all thet was ter ther surgeon."

"I wish as how I c'u'd hev told him what ther Hyena's leetle game were; but as I c'u'dn't, I hev done ther best I c'u'd, an' Doc an' I hev clasped han's as belongin' to a Death League ag'in' them as hes wronged him."

After again shaking hands on his compact with the Gold Buzzard captain to aid in the rescue of Janette, Devil Jim mounted his horse and rode off rapidly to join the Surgeon Scout.

As he passed the entrance to the canyon he saw a fresh trail leading into it, or rather one that had been made the evening before, and instantly he determined to see what it meant, feeling certain that the Surgeon Scout would await him at the camp.

Upon following the trail up the canyon, and arriving in sight of Captain Kit's retreat, to his utter amazement, as the reader has seen, he beheld Frank Powell across the stream, seated in front of the cabin.

What followed has already been made known.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE REFUSAL.

THE story told by Devil Jim to Frank Powell was substantially the same as has just been related in the two foregoing chapters.

In finding the Surgeon Scout his one-armed pard was delighted at the prospect he had of giving him aid at once, which would enable them to push on, run Captain Kit and his men to earth, get them at bay and at once end the matter.

The Doctor listened most attentively to Devil Jim, following him patiently through all his conversational meanderings, for which he was noted, and then said quietly:

"Now, Jim, what is your idea of all this?"

"My idee, Doc, are to strike at once fer ther Gold Buzzard's Roost, j'ine 'em an' then foller ther trail o' Cap'n Kit an' finish him."

"But, Jim, do you think I wish to seek the aid of men who are outlaws?"

Devil Jim looked nonplused.

For a moment he was silent, and then he said:

"That Buzzard cap'n was in dead end."

"I have no doubt of it, Jim."

"He could hump it along and soon make a rope fer ther Hyena."

"I have no doubt of that either, Jim."

"Waal, I only knows he wants ter sarve yer, fer he says he hes heerd o' yer, knows yer is grit, tooth an' toe-nail, an' thet yer acted ther squarest deal with him t'other days, when yer held a handful o' trumps, thet he ever knowed of."

"For all that, Jim, he is an outlaw, and I cannot accept his services, though I thank him most warmly for his kindness, and appreciate the interest he has taken in my affairs."

"Hain't I a outlaw too, Pard Doc?"

"No, for you are reformed, and already have I made application for your pardon, and it was signed by all at the fort, for your gallant deed in warning the soldiers of their danger that night in camp and thus saving them from massacre."

"Waal, I is growin' taller under this news, an' when I gits ther paper I guesses I'll be pardoned."

"But I don't want no pardon, nor nothin' else, until you hes tuk ther scalp o' ther Hyena an' got back ther leetle wife."

"I hope to do both before long, Jim; but now we must settle this Gold Buzzard matter."

"How yer goin' ter do it?"

"I saw pen, ink and paper in the cabin, and I will write the captain a letter, and ask you to carry it to him meeting me at the brook you spoke of when you lost the Hyena's trail, an' which I know well."

"I'll take ther letter, Doc, an' meet yer ther."

"Then leave that horse here, and select the two from the lot you like best, for by ridin' one and then the other we can push on more rapidly."

Frank Powell then entered the cabin and wrote as follows:

"ON THE TRAIL."

"DON DRAGON, OF GOLD BUZZARD ROOST:—

"SIR:—Your kindness in making the offer you did in my behalf to my one-armed ally, is most sincerely appreciated and accept my thanks, I beg you."

"But I started out on this long trail, aided only by my pard, Jim, and I intend to keep it to the end with no other assistance."

"Again thanking you,

"I remain,

"FRANK D. POWELL,

"Surgeon of U. S. Army."

"Well, Jim, here is the letter, and we will get off at once, for I do not wish the Hyena to have too long a start."

"He don't travel fast, Doc, an' we'll catch him; but hear I go."

Half an hour after, Devil Jim rode away on his errand, while Frank Powell, having raised the bridge spans and crossed the river in the boat, hid it away as he found it, and started upon the trail once more, carrying his own and his pard's extra horses with him.

Jim went on his way to the Buzzard's Roost greatly disappointed.

He had hoped that the Surgeon Scout would accept the offer of the Gold Buzzard captain, and that the Hyena would come to a speedy end.

He rode up to the "Roost" on the mountain in no cheerful mood, and was greeted by the chief.

"I hes a letter fer yer, cap'n."

The outlaw took the letter, read it carefully through, and smiled.

"Does yer think it funny?" asked Jim.

"No, I regret that Surgeon Powell does not accept my services, and I smiled at his motive, though he writes me a very polite letter."

"He won't accept ther service o' ther sojers even," said Jim, wishing to ameliorate the rebuff to the captain if he suspected the cause.

"True, but that is because he did not care to draw Government troops into a personal quarrel."

"He refuses me because I am an outlaw, and I cannot blame him, though I am sorry that he does so, for I like the man immensely, and wish to serve him, aside from having a personal grudge against Captain Kit."

"Aha! you has, has yer?"

"Yes, but that I have never pushed."

"When does the surgeon start?"

"He hev gone."

"Already?"

"Yas, he means business."

"Of course you go with him, Devil Jim?"

"Yas, he waits fer me at ther ford whar we lost ther trail."

"Well, luck to you, and take Surgeon Powell this silver flask of brandy from me, and tell him it is the best, as I took it myself from a Governor's sachel."

"Good-by, and success attend you."

"Thankee, an' does you expect me ter travel with this loaded weepin' right by me, an' not expect it ter go off?" and Devil Jim held up the silver flask, which was a very handsome present indeed, while the contents might certainly come in most usefully.

"Ah I would have forgotten you, Devil Jim, but for your reminder that you deserve a souvenir of Don Dragon also."

"Take this little buckskin bag of metal for traveling expenses on your way," and he tossed Dick the bag, which was caught with a skill a crack base-ballist could not have excelled.

"Thankee, cap'n, an' I hopes ter see yer ag'in."

With this Devil Jim rode off, and reaching the valley, headed for the rendezvous with Frank Powell, which was fully twenty miles distant.

He had not been gone very long when Don Dragon, who had been pacing to and fro in silent thought, the surgeon's letter in his hand, placed a small silver bugle to his lips and blew three long, clear notes.

In response the men began to gather around him.

"Four of you boys prepare to go with me on a long trail," he said.

"When do we start, captain?" asked one.

"At once."

A few moments after the party of five mounted and rode away, leading two pack-horses, and upon reaching the valley they struck Devil Jim's trail and followed it.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JANETTE STRIKES BACK.

CAPTAIN KIT certainly knew what he was about when he left the cabin retreat in the canyon, and went down into the wild lands, where he intended to hide for awhile from Powell's fury.

The nature of the country was such that it seemed strange that a man would seek it out, even to dig from the land a fortune.

It was rugged and wild in the extreme, the

forests and canyons were filled with wild beasts, and yet, gold having been found there, scattered about the mountains and valleys were men digging for the precious metal.

But those men were such as could not even live in other mines, and whose deeds had caused them to hide like hunted beasts.

They dug what gold they could by day, and often by night were wont to prow around to see if they could steal the hoardings of their neighbors.

In this way the hand of every man was there turned against his neighbor, there were no friendships, and few meetings together, and all was fear and treachery.

Some time before Monkton had purchased one of these "claims" from a man who had found digging too slow work to get rich, and, robbing his neighbors had been forced to fly for his life.

He had joined the Red Angels, and for a mere song had sold his claim to his chief.

Armed with the right and title given him, and with a map to show its exact locality, Monkton was going there to make it his abiding-place for the present.

He knew just how wild the country was, and, more, he knew the lives of those who dwelt there.

But, going there with his faithful negro, Kirk Kendrick, Bonanza Bill and Jack to aid him, he had no fear of being either robbed or run out.

He got it into his mind that Powell would not follow him there, and if he did he would have to come alone, or with only his two brothers.

Of his or their coming, if they came, Devil Jim would give him warning, and then they could be ambushed and slain, after which Monkton could return to his mine, or rather Janette's, in the canyon, and make his fortune out of it.

As Paul Monkton, no one could bother him, even if the officers from the Nebraska fort came there, for no one knew him as Captain Kit, the Red Angel, and he could work his mine in peace.

Such was his plan, and with a hopeful heart for the future he pushed on, feeling no anxiety of being overtaken with Devil Jim hanging back in the rear.

He made no explanation to those with him, other than to Kirk Kendrick, the deserter, regarding the presence of Janette, after he had stated that she had gone away from the canyon.

As to Janette, he was somewhat anxious about her, for he did not like her manner.

It was cold and cynical.

She answered him when he addressed her, but spoke voluntarily to no one but Brick.

When they reached their camp she ordered the negro to erect a little shelter for her, and to bring her food to her there.

"I wish to be apart from the others, and say to your master, if he fears to trust me, he has but to place upon my wrists the irons. I see that he has brought along," she said.

Brick told Captain Kit just what she had said, and the reply was:

"I do fear to trust her, Brick, and after she has had her supper put those irons upon her wrists and make them secure to a tree, so that she cannot escape."

"The girl has developed into a thorough devil, and I fear to trust her."

Brick obeyed his master's orders implicitly Janette submitting without a word to being ironed.

The next day Janette rode by the side of the negro, and Monkton was forced to submit to it, though he saw Bonanza Bill wink at Jack and heard the latter's remark:

"She bullies ther cap'n clean through."

The next night the camp was made in a wild region of country, and only a few hours' ride from the mine that was Captain Kit's destination.

It was a lovely night, with a moon a week old lighting up the scene.

Mountains, canyons, valleys and streams were visible upon all sides, and the trail before nightfall had led along a narrow shelf that looked down thirty feet into a foaming river.

As soon as the shelf was passed and a valley reached Monkton had given the order to camp.

It was just sunset, and yet it was almost dark down in the gloomy depths of the val-

ley, shut in as it was upon both sides by forest-clad mountains.

The roar of the rushing waters, the sighing of the winds through the innumerable pines, the howling of wolves, disturbed by human beings intruding into their domain, and the call of night-birds were in one grand chorus.

Brick, as before, went first to work to prepare the shelter for Janette, while Bonanza Bill built a fire, and Dave prepared the game killed during the day, for cooking.

As usual Monkton and Kirk Kendrick did nothing more than unsaddle their horses and stake them out, a by no means very arduous undertaking.

Janette stood quietly watching Brick build her shelter, until, suddenly glancing toward where Bonanza Bill was building the fire, she saw that he had unbuckled his belt of arms and hung them on a branch of a tree near by.

Quickly she glided toward them, drew a revolver, and with her face gleaming with fury, turned toward Paul Monkton, who stood near, talking in a low tone to Kirk Kendrick.

"Now, Paul Monkton, you shall die by my hand!" she shouted, in a voice that rung through the valley, and following her words came the crack of the revolver.

CHAPTER XLIV.

BRICK TO THE RESCUE.

THE shot that rung out through the valley, and fired by Janette, was meant to kill.

The young girl was a crack shot, and she had been goaded on to take the life of the Red Angel chief.

Every particle of love she had ever had for him had turned to bitterest venom of hatred, and she would have gloated over his death.

She recalled his winning ways, his elegant manner, soft voice, and professions of love for her years ago.

She recalled what he had been, and what he might have been, had he turned his talents to good account.

His double game of Red Angel and ranchero, his devilish plot, that so well triumphed, to steal her from Frank Powell, and his scheme away back in the past, to bind her to him by marriage, were all thought of and treasured up in her hatred of him.

His deception of all, his slaying of her father, his murders and robberies, and last, his plan to get possession of her and the mine, which she now knew to be paying well, were all gone over and over again, until she was ready for any act against him.

She had been put in irons and held a prisoner, and in his retreat she had been ironed again, and the negro had been near her even then as a guard.

The few words of Devil Jim had given her hope.

She had believed that it would be impossible for even Frank Powell to follow the trail left by the Red Angels.

But Devil Jim had said that he was near.

If so, then his brothers must also be with him, and with such a man as the one-armed outlaw as one of the Death League, then certainly she had every reason to hope that her rescue would follow.

But then it must come to a desperate struggle, for those hunted men would die in their tracks by bullet or knife before they would surrender and end their days with a rope around their necks.

In such a combat surely Frank Powell or one of his brothers must fall.

It could hardly be otherwise.

But, with Monkton dead, would not the others be glad to depart, anyway, anywhere?

Such was the question she asked herself, and so reasoning, she determined to act.

What would become of her she did not know, nor did she care.

She had become reckless, and she was willing to die if she could kill Paul Monkton.

Her death might follow immediately at the hands of the negro or his comrades.

But if not, then she would do what she could to take care of herself.

Having thus made up her mind to kill Monkton, she was constantly on the watch for a weapon with which to do it.

She was wholly unarmed, and to get a revolver or knife, she must seize it from the belt of some of the gang.

The negro and Monkton watched her so

closely that she saw how useless it would be to attempt to take one of their weapons.

But, in her dilemma, Bonanza Bill hung his belt of arms upon the side of a tree, while making the fire.

In an instant Janette had seen the act, and in another moment she had the revolver in her hand.

Cocking and leveling it at Paul Monkton, not five paces from her, she drew the trigger.

But just as she did so, the weapon was struck up and the bullet passed over the head of the Red Angel.

At the same instant Janette was seized in a grip which she could not shake off, and with a cry of pain at the pressure upon her wrist, she was forced to drop the revolver.

"Bravo for you, Brick! You saved my life that time, my good fellow."

"But hold the beautiful tigress until I put her iron bracelets upon her fair wrists."

Monkton spoke lightly, but he was deeply moved.

He saw how near he had been to death, and he knew that he had a woman for a foe who would kill him without mercy.

He got the handcuffs, and Janette, haughty, white and quivering with rage and disappointment, was soon helpless.

"How did she do it, Brick?" asked Monkton, as the negro returned to the fire and began to prepare supper.

"I were makin' her shanty, massa, an' miss her."

"Then I seen what she were up to."

"Ef I call out, somebody get hurted, I know, fer she already hab de weepin, so I jist walk quick an' soft, like a Injin, an catch arm jist in time."

"Dat de way it were, sah."

"Bless you, Brick, you are a black diamond."

"Thankee, sah; but it were a mighty close shave, fer when I grip her hand it were like a rock, an' she hab dead aim at you, sah."

"No doubt, and as we know now, Brick, that she means mischief, we will let her go."

"Turn her loose, sah?"

"Yes."

"She kill us all sure, massa."

"I think not, Brick," was the significant reply, "for when I let her go she will be harmless."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE "CLAIM" OCCUPIED.

THERE was a gloom upon the outlaw camp, after the daring act of Janette.

Monkton was out of sorts, though Kirk Kendrick seemed pleased from some reason, and Bonanza Bill and Jack looked askance at the little shelter that held Janette, and prognosticated evil to come.

The supper was eaten in silence, and Brick was told by the girl when he carried hers to her, that she did not wish any.

The night passed through without incident, all retiring early and rising with the dawn.

Brick soon had breakfast ready, and all ate with more of a relish than they had had the night before, though still a feeling of restraint seemed to rest upon each and every one.

To the surprise of Brick, Janette ate heartily, and seemed as calm as a May morn.

She was ready for the ride, and said pleasantly:

"Of course you will leave my irons upon me."

"I s'pose so, missy."

"Keep her irons on her, Brick," called out Monkton, and that settled it.

Janette sprang lightly to her saddle, despite her chains, and then one hand was still kept ironed.

All being ready, the party moved off on the march, going at the same slow pace which they had held all along.

Now and then Monkton would cut a switch from a tree, notch it, sharpen the end, and leaning from his saddle place it in the ground.

"I hope that Devil Jim will find no difficulty in trailing us, for I have left the signs regularly," he said to Kirk Kendrick, who rode by his side.

"Oh, he'd trail us if you had left no signs, Paul, for he can follow the track of a snake, I really believe."

"In fact I never saw such a trailer."

"I have."

"Any of your band?"

"No."

"Who is it?"

"There are three of them."

"You mean the Powell pards?"

"Yes, of course."

"I had not thought of them."

"I think of them all the time," said Monkton, in a way that made the deserter shudder, and involuntarily glance over his shoulder.

Monkton saw the look and said:

"Devil Jim is behind us, so there is no danger now."

"What if they had killed Devil Jim?"

"Ha! I never thought of that."

"Ho, Brick!"

"Yas, massa."

"Ride in front with that tiger lily."

"Yas, massa."

"Keep about a hundred feet ahead of me."

"Yas, sah."

"And Bill!"

"Ho, cap'n."

"You and Jack keep in the rear a hundred yards."

"Yes, cap'n," answered Bonanza Bill, while, as he reined his horse back to the required distance, he said to Jack:

"Pard, durned ef I don't believe ther cap'n are gittin' narvous."

"It do look thet way, Bill."

And certainly this idea of the men was not far wrong, for the constant dread of the man he had so wronged being upon his track was beginning to tell upon the nerves of the Red Angel chief.

"Push on to the mine, Brick, for we will be there in an hour or so, and have dinner and supper together," called out Monkton, as the negro began to look for a good camping-place for the noonday meal.

As they went on the country became, if anything, wilder, and it seemed as though man would never care to set his foot there.

When the sun's shadows began to lengthen, they at last came in sight of the outlaw's "claim."

It was under the brow of a lofty hill, and about it was a vale, or dell, that made it a more desirable spot than any that had been seen in that drear region.

A rude log hut, ten feet square, stood in the vale, and thither Brick made his way.

There was a good spring near by, and that it was the resort of wild beasts their numerous tracks showed.

The cabin held an occupant, who stood in the door as the party rode up.

One hand was upon his hip, and the other was out of sight behind the door-post, doubtless resting upon a rifle.

He was a large man, with long beard and hair, and the looks of a villain, generally.

His clothes were in tatters, but his weapons looked bright as though well cared for.

"Hello, my man, who are you?" called out Monkton, as he rode up.

"I are myself," was the cool reply.

"You look it; but can you tell me if this is the Eureka Claim?"

"It were ther Eureka Claim, but I hev named it arter myself, an' my name are Tornado Tom."

"Ah! and do you claim it as your property?"

"I does."

"By what right?"

"Ther right o' desartion by its former owner an' my steppin' in an' workin' it."

"Does it pan out well?"

"Mid'lin' good."

"Well, Tornado Tom, I bought this claim and I have come here to locate."

"Here is the quit-claim of Will Stevens, the former owner, and the map of the situation, and all."

"Now I don't mind having a good man like you to work for me, and I will pay and feed you well; but if you put on airs and claim my property, there will be a tornado right here that will sweep you clear of this farm."

"Now, what do you say?"

"Pard, I hain't no man ter put on airs when ther deal is ag'in' me."

"I were comfortable here, hev put away a leetle mite o' dust, an' ef yer says yer own ther lay-out, an' wishes me ter sarve yer, I'm yer chicken."

"All right, Tornado Tom, the tling is settled, and I am glad of it, for I did not wish

to have trouble with you, as you look like one that can serve me well."

"I hain't no slouch, pard, an' though I hain't no right to this claim, I hev a leetle graveyard down thar on ther river thet I hev made out o' them as wanted ter take ther lay-out from me."

"Ef you hed looked simple, I'd hev added you to my bone collection; but as yer held a full hand I caved."

"Now, boss, what are ter be did?" and Tornado Tom showed himself to be a man with downright business qualifications, and soon had the party feeling at home.

"Who are ther pretty gal, boss?" he asked of Monkton after awhile.

"It is a Tiger Lily that I have brought out to plant in these wilds."

"I see; waal, she are a clover-blossom an' no mistake; but don't you let ther pilgrims thet dwell in this kentry know thar are a gal here, or you'd be shot by some man as wanted ter marry yer widder."

"I shall be ready to greet all visitors, Tornado Tom, and if you have any friends dwelling near that do not wish to be cut off suddenly, advise them to stay away from here."

"Pard, I hes no friend in the world; leasewise, I hasn't but one, an' that one are my pocket-book."

"Ef it are fat, it buys friendship; but ef it are thin, then thar is no one cares fer me."

"You are quite a philosopher, Tom; but now take a little walk with me, and let me see the surroundings of my new home," and under the guidance of Tornado Tom, Monkton walked up the mountain-side.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE RED ANGEL'S REVENGE.

NIGHT, black, gloomy, fell upon the outlaws in the new home they had sought, and it seemed to impress one and all of them.

Brick had cleared out the cabin of Tornado Tom's baggage, which was nothing more than some ammunition, a bag of provisions and a couple of blankets.

Then he had fitted up the place for Janette as well as he could, for Brick did all in his power for her comfort.

She had retired to the cabin, seemingly glad to be alone, and seated herself at a rude table, on a ruder bench.

The pack-saddles had furnished a few candles, and one of these had been lighted, and displayed how dismal was the interior.

In one corner was the bunk, where Brick had spread her blankets, and in the fireplace were some logs that were just igniting, for the evenings were getting chilly.

With her face buried in her hands, one slender wrist manacled, and the chain attached fastened around one of the logs that formed the cabin, Janette sat, the very picture of despair.

What a change had come over her, she thought.

How much of sorrow, of anguish, of hardship and wretchedness she had known since she had come to that far land of the setting sun.

Reared in luxury, she seemed to be almost dying in wretchedness of body, heart and soul.

It was bitter for her to bear, and a less strong nature than hers would have yielded under the strain.

But the same feeling that had prompted her to wish to live, to avenge her father's death, now buoyed her up with the hope that she would yet be able to get revenge for her own wrongs.

And thus she sat, with the night falling upon the scene without, and no cheer, no comfort within.

Near the cabin the outlaws had thrown up for themselves a brush shanty, and their horses were feasting upon the best of pasture not far away.

Brick had pressed Tornado Tom into service to aid him, bring several huge logs, and the result was a roaring fire that cast a glare to the end of the little vale, and sent shadows dancing far up the mountain-sides.

Around the huge camp-fire was seated Monkton, with Kendrick by his side, Jack and Bonanza Bill, while Tornado Tom was aiding Brick with an alacrity that showed he was anxious for supper to be served.

After he had selected the choicest bits for Janette, Brick said:

"De supper am ready, gemmens."

While all were falling to with a relish begot of losing their dinner and the crisp mountain air, Brick carried the supper he had prepared in to Janette.

"Eat, missy, and you find him all splendid."

"Brick!"

"Yas, missy."

"You seem kind, and yet you are but a bitter enemy to me," said Janette.

"No, missy, I do just what massa tell me."

"In everything?"

"Yas, missy."

"Suppose he told you to kill me, would you do it?"

"Yas, missy."

She shuddered at his cool reply, and then said:

"Suppose I made you rich, would you allow me to escape?"

"No, missy."

"You would not go with me if I promised to give you a home, and you could live with those who would care for you all the rest of your life?"

"No, missy, I no leave massa."

"As faithful as a dog, even though his master is the worst brute of the two," hissed Janette, as she waved the negro away.

Out he went, and Janette listened to the sounds without until the hum of voices died away.

Then the howling of the wolves, hooting of owls, and other dismal sounds kept her awake far into the night.

With the morning she hoped to be able to get out into the fresh air, and asked Brick to allow her to do so.

"Massa say no, missy."

"You can chain me to a tree like a dog," she said, bitterly.

"No, missy, you must stay here," answered the negro.

Thus the day passed away, and in solitude poor Janette had spent it.

Tornado Tom had shown Monkton and others about the mine, and then they had gone to work to build a larger cabin, and make themselves more comfortable, for in a short while the winter would be upon them, and the outlaw chief had decided to pass it there digging what gold he could out of the claim, and then, in the spring return to look after his stolen interests in the cabin.

The whole afternoon he had appeared moody and in ill-humor, and after supper called Brick one side with him.

"Brick!" he said, and pausing, he glanced about him suspiciously.

"Sah, to you, massa," answered the black.

"Brick, do you know I think to have a woman in a place like this is bad luck?"

"It may be, massa."

"We dare not let her go."

"No, indeed, massa."

"If we did she would kill some of us."

"She kill you, sart'in sure, massa."

"Then what is to be done?"

"I dunno, massa."

"Brick, I'll do what you say. What do your old witches say should be done to those who give us bad luck?"

"Kill 'em, sah."

"And then good luck follows, does it not?"

"Sart'in sure to, massa."

"Brick," and Monkton spoke in a whisper.

"Sah, to you."

"Suppose we kill her?"

"Just as massa say," was the cool reply.

"Would you kill her?" and in spite of his efforts at self-control, Monkton shuddered at his own question.

"Sart'in sure, ef massa done tole me."

"How?"

"Wid knife, or wid bullet, jist as massa pleases."

Monkton took a turn up and down, his face writhing with emotion as could be seen when the moon, peering over the mountain, shone upon it.

"Brick!" and again he faced the negro.

"Yas, massa."

"My mind is made up."

"Sah?"

"That girl I loved when she was a child,

and I bound her to me, fearing that others would take her from me."

"But I went wrong, ran off from my old home, and coming West became what I am."

"I have robbed, murdered, and committed all other crimes, as you know, except to take a woman's life."

"But Janette would not listen to my entreaties, she turned against me, when we might have lived in happiness together, and she has made me a perfect devil."

"Yas, massa," and Brick acquiesced by accident, though it cut Monkton deeply.

"Oh! I know that you are aware how bad I am."

"But, Brick, I can stand it no longer to have that girl hate me as she does."

"She would kill me this moment if she were free, and I would be in constant dread of my life."

"The men don't wish her here, for they are afraid of her, and say that it is bad luck to put a woman in irons."

"If I take them off, it will be worse luck for me."

"I cannot keep her a prisoner all the time, and if I send her off she would go back to Powell, and that shall never be, for he would still track me, and I confess to being nervous already, at having him on the trail."

"Now, Brick, I have decided that she must die."

"Yas, massa."

"And you must kill her, Brick."

"I hears you, massa."

"I will tell you how, for I do not care to have you use your knife."

"But up the mountain-side there, you will find a ledge of rock."

"Yas, sah."

"Take her there to-morrow night, after we have all retired, and hurl her from there into the river below."

"Maybe she swim, sah?"

"She will never swim after being thrown from that dizzy height, and in those rushing waters beneath the ledge a strong man could never live a minute."

"Massa know."

"Then take her there to-morrow night."

"Tell her that I said she could take a walk with you for exercise, and therefore take her chains off, for she will be otherwise suspicious."

"When you reach the ledge, be on the inside, and then hurl her over."

"Yas, massa."

"Go there now and select the best spot."

"Yas, sah."

"After you have thrown her into the river return to the cabin, and do not speak of her to the men, but let them believe the next morning that she has made her escape."

"I do it all right, massa," replied Brick, with a grin, and Monkton turned and walked rapidly away, while the negro went on up to the ledge to take observations to carry out his dastard work.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A DASTARD DEED.

THE following afternoon Janette stood in the door of the cabin, which was her prison, while the men were away in the mines, all excepting the black bravo, who was busy around his fire.

Janette was still manacled, and, as her small hand rested upon the door-post, the iron could be seen about the slender wrist.

Suddenly a horseman appeared in view, and Janette's heart gave a bound at sight of him.

The black was cutting wood, with his back to the trail that led to the cabin, and did not see the horseman.

Nor did he hear the hoof-falls, as he had just thrown an armful of wood upon the fire, which crackled loudly, and destroyed all other sounds.

Up to the cabin rode the horseman, and he raised his sombrero to Janette, while his eyes were full of fire at the sight of the chains upon her.

Instantly he seemed bent upon some desperate resolve, and sprung from his horse; but ere he could make a move Brick caught sight of him and came toward him, while down the mountain side appeared Monkton and his men.

"I were jist a few moments ahind time," muttered the horseman in a disappointed

tone, while Monkton, catching sight of him, called out:

"Ho, Devil Jim! you are welcome, I pledge you."

"What news, old man?"

"Waal, I has news, an' I hasn't, cap'n; but you hain't lookin' jist lovely, fer yer is pale, an' looks as tho' yer didn't sleep o' nights."

"Oh, I'm all right, only working hard in our new home."

"Yas, it are hard work ter boss other folkses, I knows; but here I are, yer see."

"Yes, and I hope you bring good news?"

"Yas, it hain't bad; but who are thet Pilgrim's Progress thar?"

"That is Tornado Tom, and he was here at the claim when we came, but concluded to work for me."

"Waal, ef he hain't a healthy specimen o' ther Wand'rin' Jew, Robi'son Crusoe, an' a Jersey tramp, then you kin git me ter eat my boots."

"How is yer, Tornado? come up an' grip ther hand o' yer fu'st cousin, Hurricane Jim."

Tornado Tom greeted Devil Jim at this invitation, but it was evident that he did not take kindly to the one-armed outlaw.

"Now Jim, what news?" asked Monkton, anxiously.

"Ther Doc hev give it up."

"No."

"I says yes."

"He is no longer on my trail?"

"No, cap'n, he hev gone back."

"All of them?"

"Yas, the Wizard Doctor, his brother pards, ther sojers and all."

"How did this happen?"

"I did it."

"You, Jim?"

"Fact, fer I jist went up ter Buzzards' Roost, bought all ther Buzzards I found thar, took 'em on ther war-path, an' we jist made ther sojers light out, an' tho' ther Powell pards showed a love fer remainin', ther officers persuaded them ter go, fer go they did."

"You don't think they came back?"

"No, cap'n, they all dusted, an' I guesses ther Wizard Three hev give up ther trail, an' ef they comes back they'll never find it, so thet you kin jist rest serene o' nights."

"Devil Jim, you are a trump," cried Monkton, gladly.

"Yas; but hain't it most supper-time, fer talkin' makes me hungry?"

"Supper will soon be ready," answered Monkton, and in half an hour they were all gathered around the fire.

Tornado Tom proposed a game of cards, but Monkton, knowing the work that Brick had in hand, said that he would have all up at an early hour the next morning, and so they turned in for the night.

But Monkton did not sleep.

He lay awake watching and waiting.

The fire soon burned down and then Brick arose from his blankets and went toward the cabin.

"Missy want to take a leetle walk?" he asked, gently opening the door.

"What! do you intend to befriend me?" cried Janette, eagerly.

"Sh! missy must not talk."

"Let Brick take irons off of missy."

"God bless you! At last! at last!" murmured the poor girl, and she followed the negro out of the cabin.

Away from the spot they noiselessly walked, up the mountain-side, and then to the fatal ledge.

There the moonlight fell full upon them, and Janette was pale with excitement, for she felt only that the negro had become her friend at last.

Whether bribed by Devil Jim, or for what reason she could not tell, and did not care.

She only felt that she was free of her irons, and would soon be out of the power of the man she so hated.

"Missy, see down dere in de water?" asked the negro, pointing down into the rushing waters.

"Yes."

"Missy must go down dere."

"But I cannot, I—oh, God!" and a wild shriek echoed through the mountains, as Janette was suddenly raised in the black's strong arms and hurled out from the ledge into space, to descend with a heavy plunge into the rushing torrent far below.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

QUICK RETRIBUTION.

I MUST now return to the two men, who had formed the Death League, to hunt down the Red Angel band, and had sworn not to desert the long trail, lead where it might, until the Hyena Captain had met with just retribution for his crimes.

After sending Devil Jim to the Gold Buzzard captain with his letter, Frank Powell went on his way to the ford where he had promised to await his one-armed ally.

He had just gone into camp on the banks of the stream, and built a fire, when Devil Jim rode up.

"Well, Jim, I am glad to see you, and I feel now as though we could start on the trail to-morrow in earnest."

"We kin do it."

"But what said Captain Dragon?"

"Oh, he smiled and tumbled."

"Tumbled?"

"Yas, to yer rackit."

"I do not exactly know how you mean, Jim."

"Waal, Doc, he said something about wishin' ter sarve yer well, but bein' as you was honest, an' he was a thief, he c'u'dn't blame yer."

"Well, Jim, I appreciate his offer, but I would not accept a favor from a man around whose neck I might have to place a rope at another time."

"Doc, yer is squar', an' even yer inimes knows thet," and Devil Jim hustled around to help get supper, and both being tired, they soon sought their blankets.

Following the trail of the Red Angels, which was plainly marked by the sticks left by Captain Kit, the two men entered the region of wild grandeur and solitude into which those they pursued had penetrated.

It was at a much faster pace than the fugitives that they were traveling, and Frank Powell had hopes of soon coming up with them.

They came upon their night and noonday camps, and could tell by these about the rate they were traveling, and how far they were ahead.

The Surgeon Scout was in favor of dashing right on into the camp when they drew near it, and settling the affair at once.

But Devil Jim argued that it would be certain death to them, and that caution and strategy could do far more.

At length they arrived at their noonday halt, and knew that the outlaws could not be far ahead.

"I'll push on a leetle rapid, and you come slow, Pard Doc."

"When I has found 'em, or come to know jist whar they is, I'll leave a sign fer you ter camp jist thar, and I'll go on an' tell ther Hyena my leetle lie about yer hevin' give up ther trail."

Thus it was decided, and after another start was made, Devil Jim pressed on alone, while the Surgeon Scout followed with the led horses.

Late in the afternoon Frank Powell came upon a little stick standing upright in the trail.

At its base lay another pointing off into a little canyon.

"Jim means that I shall camp over yonder," he said, and rode over into the canyon.

Staking the horses out, he took his rifle and walked on slowly down the trail.

Night overtook him, but he knew that Devil Jim must come back that way and so kept on.

At last he halted where the trail ran along the border of a large and swiftly-running stream.

The moon was rising over the mountain, and the scene was grandly beautiful, yet imposing in its solitude.

Walking along the banks of the stream he again halted and stood gazing upon a rugged hight that arose towering into the skies upon the other shore.

From its side jutted out a point, or ledge; but a bend in the trail carried him out of sight of it into the timber.

Suddenly a shriek rung out upon the night air.

"Ha! was that a panther's cry?"

"How human their cries sound, and often I have believed that it was a human voice calling when I have heard them."

So saying he walked on again, and the trail brought him out within full view of the ledge that had before attracted his gaze.

But now he saw that the ledge had an occupant.

A tall form stood upon its very edge, and the moonlight falling upon it revealed to Frank Powell who it was.

"By Heaven! it is that Black Bravo! the wretch who has been Janette's guard."

"Yes, there can be no mistaking that giant form and his huge sombrero."

"If he were on this side of the river I would force a combat with him; but as he stands there I will make him my victim."

"It will be one more, and the most dangerous devil of the lot out of my way, and I should show no spark of mercy now."

"And I will not!"

With these words he stepped out of the timber's shadow into the broad moonlight. Raising his rifle to a ready, he gazed upon the giant form for an instant longer.

Then he lowered the weapon and raised his glass to his eyes.

"Yes, it is that wretch and I must do my duty."

"The distance is little over a hundred yards and I can readily kill him."

Then, raising his voice, he called out:

"Ho, Brick, your days are numbered!"

The negro heard the ringing voice, knew it but too well, and started to bound away from the fatal spot where a few moments before he had hurled Janette to her fate.

But the Surgeon Scout touched his trigger, the flash and report followed, and with a wild, unearthly yell, the huge black villain staggered backward and fell with a terrific splash into the rushing waters.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HUNTED HARD.

NOT only was the fearful shriek of the Black Bravo heard down at the cabin, but also the shot, and each man in the little camp sprung to his feet.

The voice that uttered that wild cry was known but too well to Paul Monkton.

He knew that Brick was no man to cry out until he was hurt, and what fate had befallen him he could not guess.

He knew that he had taken Janette to the ledge, for he had seen them leave half an hour before.

Had she turned the tables upon him in some mysterious manner?

Had she gained possession of a pistol in some way and shot the black?

Was it the negro that had plunged into the water or was it Janette?

He had heard her shriek awhile before, but Bonanza Bill had said it was a panther's cry, and it had not been heard by the others, or if so, they had made no remark upon it.

In breathless terror at his own conscience the guilty man had waited, after Janette's shriek, and then had come the shot and terrible yell.

Almost wholly unnerved he had bounded to his feet.

Then he cried:

"To the rescue, men, for that was Brick's cry."

Away he darted up the mountain-side, and quickly upon his heels came Devil Jim, Tornado Tom, Bonanza Bill and Jack.

Arriving at the ledge, all was quiet; but as they stood there, a bright flame shot out from the other shore and a bullet had cut its way through the sombrero worn by Bonanza Bill.

And by that instant flash a tall form had been seen in the edge of the timber that now stepped boldly out into the moonlight and shouted in trumpet tones:

"Ho, Captain Hyena, I am on your trail to follow it to the end!"

"Away, men! for God's sake away!" shouted Monkton, with livid face and quivering nerves.

Followed by his comrades he darted down the mountain-side, saddles and bridles were rapidly thrown on the horses, and without waiting to pack up their traps, the now thoroughly alarmed fugitives started off down the valley at full speed.

A mile below the cabin was a rapid, where

the water was shallow, the stream spreading out to great width.

Here was where they had crossed on their way to the claim, and all looked anxiously out over the moonlit waters, expecting to see the Wizard Trio coming across.

But no horsemen were in sight, and on they pressed down the river-bank.

At first it was the intention of Devil Jim to drop back and return to his Death League pard.

But then he remembered that it would be best for him to go with Captain Kit, and his men, to leave a plain trail for Frank Powell to follow in the morning, for it would, with the numerous mountain streams, and the rocky nature of the country, be a very easy thing for the Red Angels to cover up their trail.

For this reason Devil Jim went on with the outlaws in their rapid flight, while Frank Powell, realizing that they were upon the other side of the river, not knowing where was a crossing, and being on foot two miles from his camp, was forced to return to his halting-place for the night, little dreaming that the outlaws were then in full flight.

Throwing himself down upon his blanket, after building a fire, he waited hoping for the return of Devil Jim.

But an hour passed and he did not come.

Then he dropped to sleep and only awoke with the light of day in his face.

Springing to his feet he was soon ready to go on.

He had become desperate, and recklessly determined to ride at once into the Red Angels' camp, grimly saying:

"Now that I have killed that black bravo, there are but four, and Jim will be there to lend me a helping hand."

So on he rode, following the trail of Devil Jim until he saw it turn across the rapids.

Over he passed in safety, the water at times rising to his stirrups, but no higher, and then he started up the stream, although he saw hoof-marks going on down the river.

"Can they have gone?" he muttered, and then added:

"I will press on to the cabin and then know all."

Arriving at the cabin, he saw that it was deserted.

The huge logs still burned, the cabin door was open, the new cabin partly built, and the pack-horses were staked out where they had been left in their rapid flight.

"They have gone in a hurry, and I will follow them in haste," he said, savagely, and he left his extra horse there and pressed on at full speed.

He soon came to the spot where he was at a loss; but only for an instant, as he discovered a piece of Devil Jim's well-known hunting-shirt.

"Good Jim! Now I see why he went with those villains, and if he had not, I would have lost their trail right here."

As the Surgeon Scout rode on, a man stepped out of the thicket and shook his fist at him, while he muttered:

"Go on, Frank Powell, for you are on the right track now, and will soon overtake your game."

"As for me, I saw that Paul Monkton's star of destiny was about to set, and I dropped off in the darkness to go my own way, that will keep me out of your grip, Surgeon Powell, and from the hangman too."

"Now to find that girl, for as Monkton did not take her with him, she lies somewhere hidden in these mountains, and I will find her."

The man now walked back into the thicket and mounted his horse, that there awaited him.

Then he rode on his way back to the cabin, little fearing molestation from any one of those who had fled for their lives, or the man who had hunted them so untiringly.

Arriving at the cabin, the horseman glanced around him with delighted surprise, while he cried:

"Well, Kirk Kendrick, you are in luck, for you have horses to sell and no mistake."

"But now to find the girl."

But for hours he searched, as the reader will understand, without finding poor Janette, and giving up hope of doing so he returned to the cabin, saying with more chagrin than sorrow:

"By Heaven! I believe that Monkton has killed her."

Although fatigued, Kirk Kendrick was determined to find out just what he had gained in property by the flight of the outlaws and rapid pursuit of them by Powell, so he began to examine the packs taken from the horses left by the Surgeon Scout.

He had not looked far before his face became crimson and white by turns.

Then he drew out several buckskin bags of gold, and next a larger one filled with treasure which Devil Jim had robbed the Gold Buzzards of that night in their Mountain Roost.

"Kirk Kendrick, your fortune is made."

"You have struck a bonanza, and to-day you are a rich man."

"But come, this is no place for you, so get your horses together and seek after a safer region."

Half an hour after the deserter was rapidly traveling away from the locality which he deemed so dangerous; but whether he got safely through that wild land was not known, for Kirk Kendrick, the Flying Courier, was not seen again by those who longed to lay their grip upon him.

CHAPTER L.

CONCLUSION.

MONTHS have passed away since Frank Powell and Devil Jim formed the death league to hunt down Paul Monkton, and those of his band who had kidnapped Janette.

After long weeks of sorrow, hardships and suffering the Surgeon Scout had again returned to the fort where he had so long been a ruling spirit.

He was accompanied by three persons, all of whom are well known to the reader, for they were Night Hawk, Broncho Bill and Devil Jim.

The two former he had met coming on the trail to join him, and to cling to him all through.

As soon as they had recovered sufficiently from their wounds they had started, and those who saw them depart and knew their errand, had said:

"Woe be unto Captain Kit and his men now that the Wizard Three are upon their trail."

But Night Hawk and Broncho Bill had met the Surgeon Scout and Devil Jim upon their return track to the fort.

They had asked few questions, but had heard enough to know that the long trail had ended, and that retribution had overtaken Captain Kit, the Red Angel.

Arriving at the fort, Frank Powell looked thin, white and haggard, and those who remembered his happy face knew how deeply he had suffered.

A silent, stern man he had come back to them, his burning eyes showing how fierce the fire that burned within.

That night the Surgeon Scout sat in the quarters of Colonel Benteen, alone with that officer.

"Powell, said the commandant, kindly, 'I seek not to pry into what you have gone through, for I feel that you have suffered too deeply for me to cause you renewed pain; but if you would tell me what you cared to, I will be under obligations, that I may know the truth of the affair from your lips.'"

"Colonel Benteen, I will tell you all that you are to know, and then from to-night we will let the dead past bury its dead."

"You are aware of what took place at the canyon when my brothers were wounded, and that I then took the trail with my one-armed ally, Dead Knife Jim, or Devil Jim?"

"Yes, the fellow who warned Captain Burt of the intended Indian attack upon him?"

"The same, sir, and we sent a petition for his pardon."

"The President granted it, Powell, I am glad to tell you."

"Thank Heaven for that, colonel, and it will give me joy to present it to dear old Jim, for through everything he has stuck to me."

"Well, sir, to tell you what happened, I can only say that Devil Jim trailed the Red Angels, and I followed."

"They took up a position in a canyon where my poor wife owned a mine, and there she became the prisoner of Captain Kit, as soon as she discovered that he was none other than the ranchero, Monkton."

"Yes, your brothers told me how he had played that double game, and I only wished I could have had him hanged," indignantly said Colonel Benteen."

"Well, sir, we, Jim and I, drove them from the canyon retreat, and followed them."

"But here let me say, colonel, that I met with an adventure with the man you have heard of."

"I refer to Don Dragon, the Chief of the Colorado Gold Buzzards."

"Ah! another candidate for a hemp cravat!"

"True, sir; and I had with him a duel on horseback."

"My bullet glanced on his skull, and his shivered Janette's miniature that was just over my heart."

"I found I had not killed the fellow, so dressed his wound and let him go; as I had plenty to attend to just then."

"Well, sir, in return he captures Jim one day, finds out that he is my friend, and boldly offered himself and ten men for my use to pursue Monkton."

"I refused, of course, and took the trail once more with Jim, and we tracked the scoundrels into the wildest part of Colorado, and found them occupying another gold-claim."

"I killed Monkton's negro—"

"Hal! that black bravo?"

"Yes, colonel, and it caused them to take flight, Jim going with them to leave the trail well-marked for me."

"I left our extra horses at the cabin and went in hot pursuit, and on the second day came upon Jim sitting by the roadside."

"He had come back under the pretense of ambushing and killing me, while Monkton and his comrades awaited Jim's return."

"Jim told me just where they were and, determined to have no ally then, I rode on, colonel, came upon the men, and right there I righted my wrongs."

"Need I say more?"

"No, Powell, and thank Heaven that man died by your hand, only he deserved a far worse end than by a bullet."

"Yes; but he is dead now, so let him off with that."

"But, Powell, found you no trace of your—your wife?"

"No, colonel, and that man died with the secret of her fate untold."

"Back over the long trail I started to find her, and then it was that I came upon Don Dragon and four of his men, who had secretly followed me, to lend aid if I should need it."

"I was touched by the kindness of the man, and he joined me in pursuit of my poor lost wife."

"Then I met my brothers Night Hawk and Broncho Bill, and together we searched the length and breadth of the trail for some clew."

"But it was useless, and at last I became resigned to feel that she was dead, or, if not, as her own words had said, and she sent them by Jim, that she was lost to me forever."

"Poor, poor girl," murmured the colonel, sadly.

And then he added:

"Powell, you have my deepest sympathy in all that you have suffered; but I will not bid you hope, for I feel that it would be cruel, and it is useless to hope."

"I have given up hope now, Colonel Benteen, and shall think of my little Janette only as a bitter memory of the past, for the short-lived joy in her love was so soon shadowed by sorrow and wretchedness that it can hardly be remembered as more than a passing dream, and so let be."

And, kind reader, the memory of Janette, his lost bride, still remains only as a bitter-sweet memory in the heart of Frank Powell, the Wizard Doctor.

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